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ABSTRACT

This study collected information on 11 community-based organization (CBO) schools that had solid reputations for helping young people. These schools focused on youth who had been unsuccessful in mainstream schools to become engaged, challenged, and supported so they could succeed educationally and change their lives and communities. All 11 schools had public access and support, operation by a CBO, and an academic program that culminated in a high school diploma. Individually, the schools provided specific examples of a variety of approaches. The CBOs that operated these schools had long histories of commitment and service to their communities' youth. Data from site visits and interviews indicated that students attending CBO schools were looking for a personalized, supportive, and engaging school environment where they could obtain the knowledge and skills to succeed as individuals and community members. CBOs shared five common areas high and comprehensive standards, relevant and diverse learning opportunities, personalized and flexible learning environments, supports and services for effective learning, and opportunities to contribute. Recommendations to maximize the potential of CBO schools include increasing access to resources, strengthening CBO schools, and connecting CBO schools to public high school system reform. (SM)

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"I came here to earn my diploma; I ended up changing my life and my community."

[illegible] Student
[illegible] Conservation Corps/Carpenter Shop [illegible] School

CBO Schools

Profiles in Transformational Education

ED 464 983

UD 035 010

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CBO SCHOOLS

PROFILES IN TRANSFORMATIONAL EDUCATION

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This project was supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research's (the Center) mission is to create and strengthen the infrastructures that support the positive development of all youth in America.

As a national capacity-building intermediary, the Center believes:

- ***all*** young people need a variety of opportunities, safe places, and caring adults and peers as they grow and develop;
- young people must be active participants in their learning and development to be productive citizens;
- nurturing young people and families fosters the growth of healthy communities;
- an intentional focus on the positive development of young people will lead to more effective and practical policies, programs, and practices; and
- changes in information, attitudes, and involvement will lead to increased support for youth development.

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research is part of AED, which is an independent, nonprofit organization focused on critical social issues in the areas of health, education, youth development, and the environment.

Youth Development can be defined as...

the ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in attempting to meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, be spiritually grounded, and build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives.

Acknowledgements

The Center had the privilege of learning from and working with an extraordinary group of people during the course of the *CBO Schools: A Crucial Education-Youth Development Link* project. First and foremost, we wish to thank the staff and students at each of the 11 CBO schools who welcomed us into their learning communities. At each school a number of people, including and beyond those mentioned throughout this document, generously shared their valuable time and experience with us during site visits, phone interviews, conferences, and meetings. We have immeasurable admiration for the vision and commitment of the staff of these unique learning communities, as well as for their students, who are equally responsible for helping to change their lives and transform education.

We also would like to thank the many educators, youth development professionals, and policy makers who participated in the three very rich roundtable discussions that helped us to more deeply explore the implications of the lessons we learned from the CBO schools. Roundtable participants are listed at the end of this document. We are especially grateful to have had a talented group of these educators, youth development professionals, and policy makers read and give us important feedback on the text of this document: Betsy Brand of the American Youth Policy Forum; Cindy Brown, formerly of the Council of Chief State School Officers; Dan Grego of TransCenter for Youth, Inc.; Mike Sack of Youth Empowerment Services; Mala Thakur of the National Youth Employment Coalition; and Ephraim Weisstein of the Commonwealth Corporation.

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A CBO School is...

a public school that is operated by a community-based organization (CBO) and which offers a diploma-granting academic program.

CBO SCHOOLS

PROFILES IN TRANSFORMATOINAL EDUCATION

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PREFACE

Dear Reader,

Did you ever spend ten minutes looking for your car keys only to find them in your pocket? That is the way we "discovered" CBO Schools. Several of the schools profiled in this report are well over a decade old and have been quietly and effectively engaging students, many of whom were not thriving in more traditional school settings.

Do these schools have a special secret? Nothing more than what many educators have been saying for a long time: smaller settings, high standards, and high expectations. Moreover, CBO Schools use experiential learning in a developmental context (e.g., community service) and positive adult-youth relationships. They also combine effective educational practices and youth development principles to create relevant learning environments for students of all backgrounds and abilities.

The fact that more community-based organizations are creating schools is important from an organizational perspective. Many CBOs have a history of reaching out to disconnected youth, providing them with short-term, informal educational support while trying to return them to the larger education system, which often has no desire or place for them. These CBOs currently do this work by patching together as many as 30 funding sources. However, the CBO's who do now operate schools receive something rare for most community-based organizations: a stable and mandated funding stream that follows the young person. Not every CBO can or should begin a

school. However, for those CBOs that do and do it well, the rewards are great for the youth and the community.

It is our hope that after reading this report you will come away with a sense that these schools are not just for kids of color or kids from limited resources, but for all youth.

For more information on this and other transformational education schools and programs refer to the web site: www.transformationaleducation.org.

Take care,

Richard Murphy
AED Center for Youth Development and Policy

"They gave me the push that I needed for college. Shalom helped give me hope for myself and my future. Everybody there played a part in giving me that hope."

—Arnaldo Rivas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

American public high schools are facing a period of enormous challenge and opportunity. Intense analysis, debate, and experimentation are focused on the best ways to ensure a quality education for the many young people who do not have access to high schools that adequately support them in their journey to become healthy, economically self-sufficient, and fulfilled adults who contribute positively to their communities. Public schools operated by community-based organizations (CBOs) are a valuable and timely resource for communities and educators to consider and support as a part of this national undertaking to reinvent high schools and help all young people to succeed educationally.

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development (AED) collected information on 11 CBO schools that have solid reputations for helping young people, especially those who have been unsuccessful in mainstream schools, to become engaged, challenged, and supported so that they find ways to succeed educationally and, in the process, change their lives and communities. At a minimum, all 11 CBO schools profiled possess the following: public access and support, operation by a CBO, and an academic program that culminates in a high school diploma. Individually, the schools provide specific examples of the variety of approaches that exist

even in this small subset.Collectively, these schools provide valuable lessons on ways to reengage young people by integrating positive youth development principles with effective educational practices that support mastery and proficiency for all. This document presents collective and individual perspectives, through cross-case analysis and short individual profiles.

All of the CBO schools profiled in this document have been in operation a minimum of three years and several for more than 30 years. The CBOs that operate these schools have long histories of commitment and service to their communities' young people. As locally based not-for-profit organizations, they may provide services across entire communities or in specific neighborhoods. Most of the schools profiled are operated by independent, locally initiated CBOs. Others have affiliations with national parent organizations. Nationally affiliated CBOs that operate schools in several communities include member organizations of ACORN, ASPIRA Association, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, National Council of La Raza, National Urban League, YMCA, and YouthBuild USA. Four of the CBO schools profiled in this document are affiliated with a national organization (National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, National Urban League, YouthBuild USA).

Young people who attend the CBO schools profiled are

primarily between the ages of 15 and 21 and are from a variety of backgrounds. Three of the schools profiled educate formerly out-of-school students who are beyond typical high school age up to age 26. Most of the CBO schools profiled provide alternative options for young people who are struggling in large, mainstream high schools, or those who have left, or been asked to leave, such schools. Similar to many young people attending large high schools in mid-size and large urban communities all over the country, students in the profiled CBO schools repeatedly reported feeling anonymous, unsafe, unchallenged, and disengaged in their previous schools. Many of these students have attended schools of substandard quality throughout most of their education, and are usually at least two grade levels behind in math and reading skills when they reach CBO schools. Moreover, many face a range of difficult life circumstances that can hinder school success and require considerable supports and services to sustain them in school.

CBO Schools: Where Education Meets Community and Youth Development

No matter what their backgrounds, young people attending CBO schools are looking for a personalized, supportive, and engaging school environment where they can obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to find success as individuals and as members of their communities. CBO schools have demonstrated the ability to reengage these young people in education and help them succeed

because they bring several crucial assets to the operation of schools by focusing on their strengths and providing:

- commitment to working effectively and intensively with young people who are most in need, focusing on their strengths while also providing appropriate supports and services;

- access to the community resources and services that support student learning and development and provide for diverse educational experiences in school and in the broader community; and

- familiarity with the community's young people and families, and experience working with them on personal and community issues.

The CBO decisions discussed here to apply these assets to the operation of schools came about through a variety of circumstances. In all cases the CBOs that operate schools are able to serve their youth populations more comprehensively within the context of their organizational mission. Some of the CBOs had opportunities early in their existence to start a school, while others did not have this opportunity until charter school legislation was enacted. In most cases, public and private initiative and vision have combined to create these schools, which play such a critical role in the public high school system.

CBO missions vary, so it follows that their educational programs do as well. Some of these CBO schools have a strong work-based learning focus, providing students who tend to be older with compensated employment and shorter, intensive, and integrated academic programs that help them transition to steady employment and further education. Most of the schools profiled offer a full-time academic program that can be completed in anywhere from two to four years, and work with students in a more typical high school age range.

The variation in age and entry-level skills of students, as well as program funding and length, contributes to a range of outcomes among students at these schools, as reflected in the individual school profiles. Some of the CBO schools profiled graduate most of their students and send many of them on to postsecondary education. Schools that have high numbers of older and low-skill students have fewer students who are able to earn their high school diplomas. Yet, even in situations where students are not able to earn a high school diploma, CBO schools help them to improve their skills and develop competencies that prepare them for the future. Focusing on the present and the future, CBO schools provide students with a variety of other opportunities to advance their personal, educational, and career development, including General Educational Development (GED) preparation and training that qualifies them for better employment opportunities.

How CBO Schools Reengage Young People in High School

While their educational programs and outcomes vary, the CBO schools profiled share a great deal of common ground in the ways they reengage young people by integrating youth development principles with effective educational practices that support mastery and proficiency for all. For organizational purposes, we group these principles and practices into the five areas listed below. Together these principles and practices make possible the transformational education that many students experience at the CBO schools profiled, as well as at other community-based alternative schools across the country. It is essential that these interdependent principles and practices are considered as a whole and not in isolation. Successful schools are strong in each of the following five areas, which are fully described in this document.

High and Comprehensive Standards

Most of the young people who attend the CBO schools profiled are looking for a learning environment where adults can provide the institutional and individual supports to look beyond the "at-risk," "delinquent," or "dropout" label that often has been attached to them, and help them to use their strengths to succeed. CBO schools provide this type of learning environment by establishing a culture of high expectations and holding students to high standards in all areas of their growth and development. CBO schools are able to reengage young people in academics because they affirm each student's potential and because they address the

whole student, linking literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking to nonacademic competencies such as employability and citizenship.

Relevant and Diverse Learning Opportunities

Many students who attend the CBO schools profiled come from environments in which there are few models of educational success that help to give school relevance and value. Moreover, many of these students previously attended high schools that were unable to provide both the instructional support needed to overcome low skill levels and the variety of learning opportunities that are responsive to different learning styles. The CBO schools profiled are able to draw on their familiarity with the young people and families who live in the community and their links to community resources in addressing these challenges. CBO schools make education relevant by building strong connections between academic learning and the issues pertinent to their students' reality and future. They respond to students' diverse learning styles by providing a variety of opportunities to actively gain and use knowledge and skills both inside and outside the classroom.

Personalized and Flexible Learning Environments

Small overall school sizes and low student-teacher ratios at the CBO schools profiled are a powerful combination that allows for increased individualized attention, instruction, and support. Beyond this individual attention to academic needs, however, students and teachers consistently reported that close relationships – between

students and staff, students and students, staff and staff, parents and schools – were primary factors in making their CBO schools effective learning environments. CBO schools build a web of formal and informal connections and supports, strategically linking students to at least one caring adult who will help to keep them engaged in their education. Many of the CBO schools profiled exercise flexibility with regard to the length of their overall educational programs, school days, and in-class times to be responsive to individual students' academic and personal needs.

Supports and Services for Effective Learning

Many young people come to these schools lacking basic supports that affect their ability to learn and succeed. As a standard part of their work with young people and other community members, CBOs routinely provide comprehensive support or make direct referrals to a wide variety of necessary services and resources that address students' needs. CBOs that operate local schools are often familiar providers of resources related to nutrition, health care, employment, housing, child care, after-school activities, language instruction, transportation, counseling, legal assistance, and more. Most significant, the positive, caring relationships that CBO schools foster with students and their families establish a personalized foundation for providing these services and helping young people to connect with the support services they need.

Opportunities to Make a Contribution

The opportunity to be productive, contributing members of their

schools and communities can be a transformational experience for many students who have felt powerless and disconnected from active participation in learning, school life, and community involvement. Such opportunities for student contributions are an integral part of CBO schools' curriculum and structure. CBO schools link both curricular and extracurricular learning to meaningful service and work opportunities that enable students to participate in and lead efforts for positive change in the community. In school they may participate in leadership development groups, school governance, curriculum development, and opportunities such as contributing to the teacher hiring process, curriculum development, school governance, team sports, and leadership groups. The supportive environment at CBO schools encourages many students to nurture their strengths and talents, leading them to become involved in activities they may have shied away from in other schools.

Recommendations to Maximize the Potential of CBO Schools

The integration of youth development principles and effective educational practices described in the above five areas has value for educators and CBOs working with young people of all ages and backgrounds, as well as for policy makers working at a systemic level toward the goal of high achievement for all students. CBO schools and other alternative community-based educators are particularly valuable resources for effecting reforms in the public high school system that will help young people most often left

behind to reach for these goals. To begin maximizing the potential of these schools to successfully reengage more young people and to influence positive change in the public high school system, several serious challenges must be addressed.

Increase Access to Resources

Most of the CBO schools profiled are trying to provide comprehensive learning environments for highly undereducated students with insufficient resources. Many CBO schools receive less state and local per-pupil funding than other public schools, and some CBO schools do not receive this funding at all. As a result, CBO schools rely heavily on other public and private funding sources that are often limited and require these schools to struggle continuously for sufficient resources to sustain their programs.

If CBO schools are to hold young people to high standards and help them graduate, the schools will need access to stable and ongoing resources that enable them to adapt their programs to address the academic gaps of their students and the demands of standards-based reform. Addressing these challenges involves analyzing current policies and funding at local, state, and federal levels that support these schools, and using this information to advocate for stronger policies and additional public resources.

Strengthen CBO Schools

Many of the CBO schools profiled face serious challenges in addressing the demands of standards-based reform because of

the large numbers of students who come to them with histories of educational failure and low academic skill levels. To continue to help young people succeed, CBO schools require access to informational resources and capacity-building networks that can provide ongoing support for improvement of instructional practices. Creating networks of CBO schools and other community-based alternative educators, and strengthening those networks that already exist, is one strategy for addressing this challenge.

There is a growing movement to strengthen and connect CBO schools and other community-based alternative educators, and to publicize the importance of these schools as valuable educators of the large numbers of young people who are not succeeding in mainstream public high schools. Efforts of some of the groups involved in this movement include developing tools for self-assessment, identifying promising practices, articulating potential linkages between these programs and mainstream public high schools, and exploring strategies to access additional resources. CBOs, educators, policy makers, and funders all must look for ways to support this movement.

Connect CBO Schools to Public High School System Reform

In general, CBO schools and other community-based alternative schools and programs operate in isolation from the mainstream public school system. As a result, these schools have largely been overlooked in the push to reform educational systems and bring

high standards and achievement to all young people. Although these CBO schools frequently offer important educational opportunities for young people who are failing in the mainstream system, there are few opportunities for CBO schools to explore and share strategies and effective practices with other public high schools. Linking local public high schools to the previously described formalized networks of CBO schools and other community-based alternative schools may offer one option for this cross-fertilization of ideas.

In some cities, public school systems are reaching out to CBOs to ask for their help in designing and operating new schools for students who are not achieving. This suggests a growing recognition that CBO schools can be valuable resources in the movement to reinvent public high schools in the United States. Though CBO schools currently educate relatively few students overall, they have demonstrated a capacity to reengage and educate young people whose learning styles and needs were not met in mainstream public high schools. By integrating the youth development principles and the effective, innovative educational practices described in this document, many CBO schools have transformed the high school education experience and changed the lives of young people who otherwise might have been left behind.

It is time to recognize CBO schools' potential approaches to the challenges facing public high school systems in educating

all students for the 21st century. CBO schools do not provide the only answer, but they certainly can be an instrumental part of the solution. Educators, policy makers, and CBOs must take steps to enable CBO schools to strengthen their work and become more effective partners in building high school systems that support quality education, high standards and achievement, and healthy development for *all* young people.

photo by Julian Okwu

A TIMELY AND VALUABLE RESOURCE

Quality education and high standards for all students. This is a rallying cry of both hope and concern that is being echoed all over the country. Many students, parents, educators, and youth development experts know what kind of schools young people need to succeed in a democratic society and a rapidly changing job marketplace. The schools they describe provide learning experiences that engage young people and challenge them to apply the knowledge attained. They are learning communities where all young people are known, respected, and supported, where their potential is nurtured and they are challenged to excel, and where they are safe and able to build vital, positive relationships with adults and peers. Yet, a large segment of our nation's young people do not have access to the schools that adequately provide these critical elements of quality education and healthy youth development.

Currently, our nation is involved in intense analysis, debate, and experimentation on the best ways to ensure high-quality education for these young people, many of them poor and/or from communities of color, who are being left behind. Relatively recently, a great deal of this attention has been focused on the need for change in public high schools. While increasing numbers of students – especially young people of color – earn high school diplomas, failure and dropout rates in mid-size and large urban communities

remain disturbingly high and are potentially on the rise due to the implementation of high-stakes testing. Moreover, there is concern whether students in these same areas who do earn diplomas have achieved a level of skills that will enable them to pursue and succeed in employment and/or postsecondary education. Also contributing to the urgent need for change is increased isolation among students in traditionally large high schools, as reflected in periodic high-profile incidents of violence in suburban schools and in students' own descriptions of their experiences.

The challenge of quality education and high standards for all high school students remains a daunting one that requires us to search within our mainstream educational systems and in our broader educational communities for schools that are successfully working with young people who otherwise might be left behind. Frequently our vision is too narrow and we overlook organizations and resources that can contribute to this effort. Community-based organizations (CBOs) are just such resources. CBOs, for the purposes of this document, are nonprofit organizations working with the adults, young people, and/or families in a particular locale to meet their individual and communal needs. The United States boasts a rich variety of CBOs committed to helping young people find safe places, adults who care about them, and engaging activities that help them develop interests, skills, a sense of self, responsibility, and a sense of belonging.

CBO Schools: Where Education Meets Community and Youth Development

Many CBOs have a long history of working with young people around their school experience, providing social and intervention services, and offering a range of opportunities, including tutoring and academic support, arts and cultural activities, sports and recreation, community service, employment and training, and leadership development. CBOs understand the importance of formal education to the success of young people and often work to complement or specifically support school engagement and academic achievement. Research consistently indicates that young people who are involved in these types of organizations and activities achieve better results in school[1].

As some CBOs worked more closely with young people and schools, leaders and staff in these organizations grew to understand that they had the potential, competence, and commitment to more directly influence the quality of young people's education and achievement by assuming full responsibility for operating a school. As a result, today CBOs operate a number of public schools, some of which have been in existence nearly 30 years, quietly, and in some cases invisibly, educating the young people most at risk of school failure in communities throughout the country.

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[1] Milbrey W. McLaughlin (2000). *Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development.* Washington: Public Education Network, p. 4.

A CBO School is...

a public school that is operated by a community-based organization (CBO) and which offers a diploma-granting academic program.

These CBO schools bring together expertise in providing safe places, caring adults, and engaging activities with effective and innovative educational practices that help young people, particularly those who have been left behind, to succeed. Yet, because CBO schools often operate in isolation from the mainstream public high schools in the cities in which they are located, they have largely been overlooked in the push to reform educational systems and bring high standards and achievement to all young people. CBO schools are growing in number, in part due to the charter school movement, and they represent hidden resources with a wealth of knowledge to offer on helping young people of all backgrounds to become successful and contributing members of society.

CBO Schools Examined

This document presents some of the lessons offered by 11 of these CBO schools (see list on the next page). The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development (AED) collected information on these schools through a combination of interviews, site visits, and roundtable dialogues with the support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Students, teachers, counselors, other instructors and

CBO School List

School	Location
Action for Boston Community Development University High School	Boston, MA
American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center Career Immersion High School	Minneapolis, MN
Arizona Call-A-Teen Center of Excellence Charter High School	Phoenix, AZ
East Bay Conservation Corps Corpsmember Charter School	Oakland, CA
El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice	New York, NY
Grandview High School	Milwaukee, WI
Minneapolis Urban League Street Academy	Minneapolis, MN
San Francisco Conservation Corps/ California Charter Academy	San Francisco, CA
Shalom High School	Milwaukee, WI
South Brooklyn Community Academy	New York, NY
YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School	Philadelphia, PA

school staff, CBOs, and school administrators all contributed to the descriptions that follow.

The Center identified these schools through its own work in some of the communities in which they are located and through consultation with other youth development experts and educators. These schools have solid reputations for helping young people, especially those who have not found success in mainstream schools, to learn, grow, and transition successfully to adult life. Taken together, they provide valuable lessons on ways to reengage young people by integrating positive youth development principles with effective educational practices that support mastery and proficiency for all. Individually, they provide specific examples of the variety of approaches that exist even in this small subset of schools. This document presents both collective and individual perspectives through cross-case analysis and short individual profiles.

At a minimum, all 11 CBO schools profiled conform to the three criteria reflected in the definition above: public access and support, operation by a CBO, and an academic program that culminates in a high school diploma. Each of these schools has been operating according to these criteria for at least three years, and across the group for an average of 12 years. Many CBOs across the country (including some of those profiled in this document) actually operate public schools at all grade levels, provide nondiploma adult education and job training for older youth, and run private schools.

In an effort to contribute to the knowledge guiding public high school reform, however, the Center focused this work on CBO schools operating as a part of public education systems and serving young people seeking high school diplomas.

Funding for CBO Schools

First and foremost, CBO schools are public schools. They educate young people free of charge and are accountable to the state and local education entities that govern them. They receive state and local education funds through various means, including contracts and agreements with local school districts and, most recently, charter school status.

Most CBO schools receive fewer state and local dollars than other public schools. The four CBOs schools profiled that operate as charter schools receive the standard per pupil funding for their state, yet may not receive additional state education funds supporting physical facilities, transportation, and other fundamental areas. CBO schools profiled that operate under contracts with public school systems have received only 80 percent of state per pupil funding in the past, though they now receive 90 percent. Yet, these schools, too, do not receive additional state education funds beyond per-pupil support. Two CBO schools profiled do not receive any state per-pupil funding, but receive in-kind contributions of teachers' salaries, books, and supplies from their local school district. Access to federal education entitlement

monies, such as Title I, varies among the schools according to district policies.

CBO schools, therefore, must rely on other public and private funding sources to offer a full range of academic and developmental supports and opportunities. All 11 CBO schools profiled rely to varying degrees on private support, mostly from state and local philanthropic foundations, but also from corporations. Half of the schools rely heavily, and most of them to some degree, on pass-through funds from competitive federal grant programs related to, among others, the Workforce Investment Act (formerly the Job Training and Partnership Act), Youth Opportunity Grants, Housing and Community Development Act (including YouthBuild appropriations and Community Development Block Grants), AmeriCorps, Safe and Drug Free Schools Act, and the School to Work Opportunities Act. Two schools also rely on public works contracts to support the work-based learning component of their program. In many cases CBO schools compete for these and other public and private funds on a regular, sometimes yearly basis.

> ***"Our schools work with young people who have been labeled. We ask them to identify and develop the gifts and assets they have, and work with them to improve areas in which they aren't as strong."***
>
> *—Daniel Grego*
> *Shalom High School*

making the funding process highly variable, time-consuming, and often unpredictable.

Types of CBOs that Run Schools

The CBO schools profiled in this document all have been in operation a minimum of three years and several have been in operation over 20 years. The CBOs that operate these schools have a long history of commitment and service to their respective communities' young people. As locally based not-for-profit organizations, they may provide services across entire communities or in specific neighborhoods. Most of the schools profiled are operated by independent, locally initiated CBOs. Others have affiliations with national parent organizations. Nationally affiliated CBOs that operate schools in several communities include member organizations of ACORN, ASPIRA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, National Council of La Raza, National Urban League, YMCA, and YouthBuild USA. Five of the CBO schools profiled in this document are affiliated with a national organization (National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, National Urban League, Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, and YouthBuild USA). The extent to which these national organizations influence and provide program funding and support to their respective affiliates' schools varies greatly.

CBO schools identified by the Center to date, beyond those

profiled in this document, are located in large and mid-size urban communities. In most cases, the CBOs are responsible for the finance and upkeep of their schools' physical facilities. Only two of the schools profiled are located in facilities that are physically separate from the CBOs' headquarters. A few of the profiled CBO schools are located in traditional school buildings, others have adapted space in CBO office buildings, and one CBO school occupies a historic neighborhood church. Three CBOs have been able to design and finance spaces that specifically suit their combined CBO and school needs, including East Bay Conservation Corps' unique retrofitted cannery building. South Brooklyn Community Academy, which started 21 years ago in the basement of a public housing authority building and later rented school space, just moved into its new facility built with funds raised by Good Shepherd Services, its sponsoring CBO. Notably, however, since CBO schools provide many learning opportunities outside of the official school facility, their students are "at school" in a variety of places: conducting experiments at the local science center and nature preserve; building a local park, community garden, or housing complex; attending classes in community colleges; working at internships in local businesses and health care facilities; or volunteering at local food pantries.

Staff in CBO Schools

CBOs staff their schools with a wide variety of caring adults. Most employ staff who have experience working with young people from

at-risk backgrounds in different contexts. Nearly all of the CBO schools profiled have one chief administrator, who may or may not be referred to as the "principal," and whose managerial responsibilities are almost exclusively confined to the school. Other CBO administrators, however, may be responsible for certain aspects of school management responsibilities. In three of the CBO schools profiled, the chief administrator of the entire CBO has daily managerial responsibility for the school. Many CBO schools profiled have the authority to identify and hire their teaching staff at the school level. Several schools, however, must hire staff consistent with the standard requirements for their local school district. During the 1999-2000 school year, the CBO schools profiled reported that, on average, 75 percent of their teachers were certified.

CBO schools have very diverse staffs in terms of roles and responsibilities, a practice explored later in this document. They emphasize student support and, as a result, many have a high number of counselor-to-student ratio. These counselors include certified social workers and guidance counselors, as well as other college graduates with applicable experience and understanding of the students' backgrounds. CBO schools with a substantive work-based learning component employ individuals who have professional experience in areas such as carpentry and conservation to serve as instructors on the work site. Finally, because CBOs have strong ties in the community, many are able to enlist the support of a wide variety of volunteers.

Students Who Attend CBO Schools

Young people who attend the CBO schools profiled are primarily between the ages of 15 and 21, and from a variety of backgrounds. Three of the schools profiled educate formerly out-of-school students who are beyond typical high school age up to age 26. Most of the CBO schools profiled provide alternative options for young people who are struggling in large, mainstream high schools, or those who have left, or been asked to leave, such schools. Nonetheless, in some cases middle school graduates and their parents do choose CBO schools from the beginning of their high school careers as ideal learning environments.

Most schools reported that their students are referred by family and friends, teachers and guidance counselors at other schools, social workers, and, in some cases, probation officers. Students themselves choose whether to attend the school, usually following an interview and orientation process. One school, El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, enrolls half of its students through an interview and orientation process, while the other half are assigned through a school option lottery process. Thus, in nearly all cases, these are schools that students choose to attend. In fact, Shalom High School's first motto, coined by students, was "We come because we want to."

Likewise, Tony, a first-year student at Grandview High School, emphasized the importance of this choice: "I don't consider it 'alternative.' I consider it my school...the best place for me."

Students who attend CBO schools are similar to many young people attending large high schools in mid-size and large urban communities all over the country. Students in the CBO schools profiled repeatedly reported feeling anonymous, unsafe, unchallenged, and disengaged in their previous schools. Many face a range of difficult life circumstances that can hinder school success and require considerable supports and services to sustain them in school. All of the schools profiled have a significant amount of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch subsidies, a common indicator of poverty. Moreover, all of the CBO schools profiled educate many young people of color who face racial inequality and discrimination. Many of these students have attended schools of substandard quality throughout most of their educational career and are usually at least two grade levels behind in math and reading skills when they reach CBO schools. Several schools reported that many students test at about a fifth- or sixth-grade level. Schools with high numbers of older high school students reported the lowest math and reading skills overall, suggesting the extent to which students' academic difficulties intensify the longer they have been out of school.

Why CBOs Operate Schools

No matter what their backgrounds, young people attending CBO schools are looking for a personalized, supportive, and engaging school environment where they can obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to find success as individuals and as members of their communities. CBOs have demonstrated the ability to reengage

these young people in education and help them to succeed by bringing several crucial assets to the operation of schools.

WHAT CBOs BRING TO SCHOOLS

- commitment to working effectively and intensively with young people who are most in need without trying to "fix" them;
- access to the community resources and services that support student learning and provide for diverse educational experiences in school and in the broader community; and
- familiarity with the community's young people and families and experience working with them on personal and community issues.

The CBO decisions to apply these assets to the operation of schools came about through a variety of circumstances. In all cases CBOs that operate schools are able to serve their youth populations more comprehensively within the context of their organizational mission. Some of the CBOs had opportunities early in their existence to start a school, while others did not have this opportunity until charter school legislation was enacted. In most

cases, public and private initiative and vision have combined to create these schools that play such a critical role in the public high school system.

Some of the CBO schools that have been operating for the longest time are in Minneapolis and Milwaukee. TransCenter for Youth, Inc., a Milwaukee CBO that began operating group homes for adjudicated youth in 1969, decided in 1973 to establish Shalom High School to better serve these young peoples' educational needs. Soon thereafter it opened its doors to any student who found academic success difficult in traditional schools. Initially registered as a private, nonsectarian school, TransCenter assessed only nominal fees and relied heavily on government grants and private foundation support. In 1985, however, the Wisconsin legislature passed a statute called "Children at Risk" (now "Programs for Children-at-Risk of Not Graduating from High School") that enabled public school districts to contract with private, nonprofit, nonsectarian agencies to educate children who meet the statute's criteria for "at risk." Daniel Grego, Shalom's longtime principal and currently director of educational services at TransCenter, was a member of the commission that crafted the legislation that enabled

> ***"This school is more like a family. The level of respect and communication is high, and they make you feel wanted."***
>
> *—Jared, Arizona Call-A-Teen*

Shalom to become a Milwaukee Public Schools "partnership school." TransCenter has since established two more CBO schools serving public high school students.

The same legislation later enabled Milwaukee CBO Seeds of Health, Inc., to become a partnership school and to expand on the basic educational support services it had provided since 1986 to young women, adolescents, and children who visited its Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics. Seeds of Health executive director Marcia Spector, also a member of the commission for the Children at Risk legislation, led the CBO as it developed a diploma program and established Grandview High School, which serves parenting and nonparenting youth. Seeds of Health now operates three elementary schools and a noninstrumental charter school as well.

The Minneapolis Urban League founded a Street Academy in 1971 to support its mission of ensuring greater access and equity for African Americans by reengaging young African Americans who were dropping out of school. The Street Academy started in a one-room building, offered two classes only, and was supported initially with monies from the Model Cities program. In 1987, the Minnesota legislature passed a statute similar to Wisconsin's, entitled "Learner Options," that allowed the Minneapolis Urban League the opportunity to acquire state funds to expand the Street Academy. The Minneapolis Urban League now operates two

schools for younger children as well. American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center, a Minneapolis CBO committed to employment training and economic development opportunities for American Indians, established its Career Immersion High School in 1995. These Minneapolis CBO schools are two of about 30 community-based alternative schools operating within the Minneapolis Public Schools system under this legislation.

In New York City, a combination of public and private initiatives begun at the city level have allowed CBOs to operate schools. Good Shepherd Services, a CBO providing social services and youth development opportunities in Brooklyn neighborhoods since 1947, was approached in 1980 by the mayor's office as a part of a city-wide initiative to address the high dropout issue. As a result, Good Shepherd forged an agreement with nearby John Jay High School and the mayor's office to educate students who were dropping out of John Jay and help them to graduate. Good Shepherd's South Brooklyn Community Academy still operates under this agreement, receiving in-kind contributions from the school district of three teachers' salaries and books, but no state per-pupil funding.

El Puente (Spanish for "the bridge") began providing youth and community development opportunities to the residents of Brooklyn's Williamsburg and Bushwick neighborhoods in 1982.

Ten years later, Frances Lucerna, artist and educator (who eventually became the first principal), and El Puente's founder, Luis Garden Acosta, organized in 1992 a community-wide development team of human rights activists, including both young people and adults, in the arts, health, and education to "reclaim for the community itself the institution of the public school." The opportunity to launch a school that was planned through this community process emerged as a result of the New Visions for Public Schools initiative launched in New York City with the support of private foundations. This initiative, aiming to create a critical mass of small, effective public schools, solicited proposals for schools from groups within and outside the school system. El Puente's Academy for Peace and Justice was one of the original 16 New Visions schools, which now total approximately 40. New Visions schools are public schools and receive funding through the New York City Board of Education based on the district's standard funding formula.

Action for Boston Community Development, one of the original antipoverty agencies established with federal funds derived from the 1964 Economic Opportunities Act, had long been providing GED and other basic education and training opportunities when leaders decided that their young people required more intensive educational support to succeed. In 1994, it entered into a contract agreement with Boston Public Schools, receiving contributions of four teachers' salaries, and established

University High School, one of nine community-based high school diploma programs in the city.

Two of the schools profiled were operating under similar agreements with their local public school districts until the passage of charter school legislation in their states. YouthBuild Philadelphia, established in 1992 by former teacher Taylor Frome in an attempt to address the 51 percent dropout rate in that city, operated with federal Housing and Urban Development and AmeriCorps funds but received only in-kind contributions of teachers' salaries from the district. Becoming a charter school in 1997 provided the organization with stable state education funds and allowed it to incorporate a high school diploma program as a part of the YouthBuild model. Arizona Call-A-Teen, a Phoenix CBO established in 1976 initially to link area teens to after-school and summer jobs, expanded its employment and training mission to operate as an alternative diploma program of the Phoenix School District. In 1995, encouraged by district officials, Arizona Call-A-Teen established the Center of Excellence Charter High School as one of the state's first charter schools and was able to increase the number of young people it served.

The remaining two CBO schools profiled in this document, East Bay and San Francisco Conservation Corps, each had approximately 15-year histories of providing young people with

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conservation and community development-related jobs, employment training, and basic and adult education before they became charter schools to provide their young people the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. Founded by Joanna Lennon in 1983, the East Bay Conservation Corps is chartered through the Oakland school board and is currently developing a K-12 charter school, with a service learning focus, to open in 2001-2002. San Francisco Conservation Corps, also founded in 1983 by then-mayor Senator Dianne Feinstein, operates its school as a campus of the California Charter Academy.

How CBO Schools Reengage Young People in High School

All of the CBO schools profiled help young people, many who have known primarily school failure, to become engaged, challenged, and supported so that they find ways to succeed educationally, and in the process, change their lives and communities. CBOs provide students the opportunity for this transformational education by integrating positive youth development principles with effective educational practices that support mastery and proficiency for all. The missions of the CBOs vary, so it follows that their educational programs do as well.

All of the schools profiled have characteristics that might qualify them for a number of educational categories: alternative

education, holistic education, adult education, community schools, neighborhood schools, democratic schools, full service schools, school-to-career schools, and small schools. Some of these CBO schools have a strong work-based learning focus, providing students who tend to be older with compensated employment and shorter, intensive, and integrated academic programs that help them transition to steady employment and further education. Most of the schools profiled offer a full-time academic program that can be completed in anywhere from two to four years, and work with students in a more typical high school age range.

The variation in age and entry-level skills of students, as well as program funding and length, contributes to a range of outcomes among students at these schools, as reflected in the individual school profiles. Some of the CBO schools profiled graduate most of their students and send many of them on to postsecondary education. Schools that have high numbers of older and low-skill students have fewer students who are able to earn their high school diplomas. Yet, even in situations where students are not able to earn a high school diploma, CBO schools help them to improve their skills and develop competencies that prepare them for the future. Focusing on the present and the future, CBO schools provide students a variety of other opportunities to advance their personal, educational, and career development, including GED

preparation and training that qualifies them for better employment opportunities.

While their educational programs and outcomes vary, the CBO schools profiled share a great deal of common ground in the ways they reengage young people by integrating youth development principles with effective educational practices that support mastery and proficiency for all. For organizational purposes, we group these principles and practices into the five areas listed below.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

- High and Comprehensive Standards
- Relevant and Diverse Learning Opportunities
- Personalized and Flexible Learning Environments
- Supports and Services for Effective Learning
- Opportunities to Make a Contribution

Together these principles and practices make possible the transformational education that many students experience at the CBO schools profiled, as well as at other community-based alternative schools across the country. It is essential that these interdependent principles and practices are considered as a whole

and not in isolation. Successful schools are strong in each of these five areas.

The next five sections describe the ways the CBO schools profiled implement these principles and practices. The information in these five sections, in combination with the short individual profiles at the end of the document, offers a glimpse of the valuable knowledge and experience housed in these 11 schools. The concluding section, Maximizing the Potential of CBO Schools, offers recommendations for tapping into this knowledge and experience as we endeavor to transform public high schools into places where all young people can succeed.

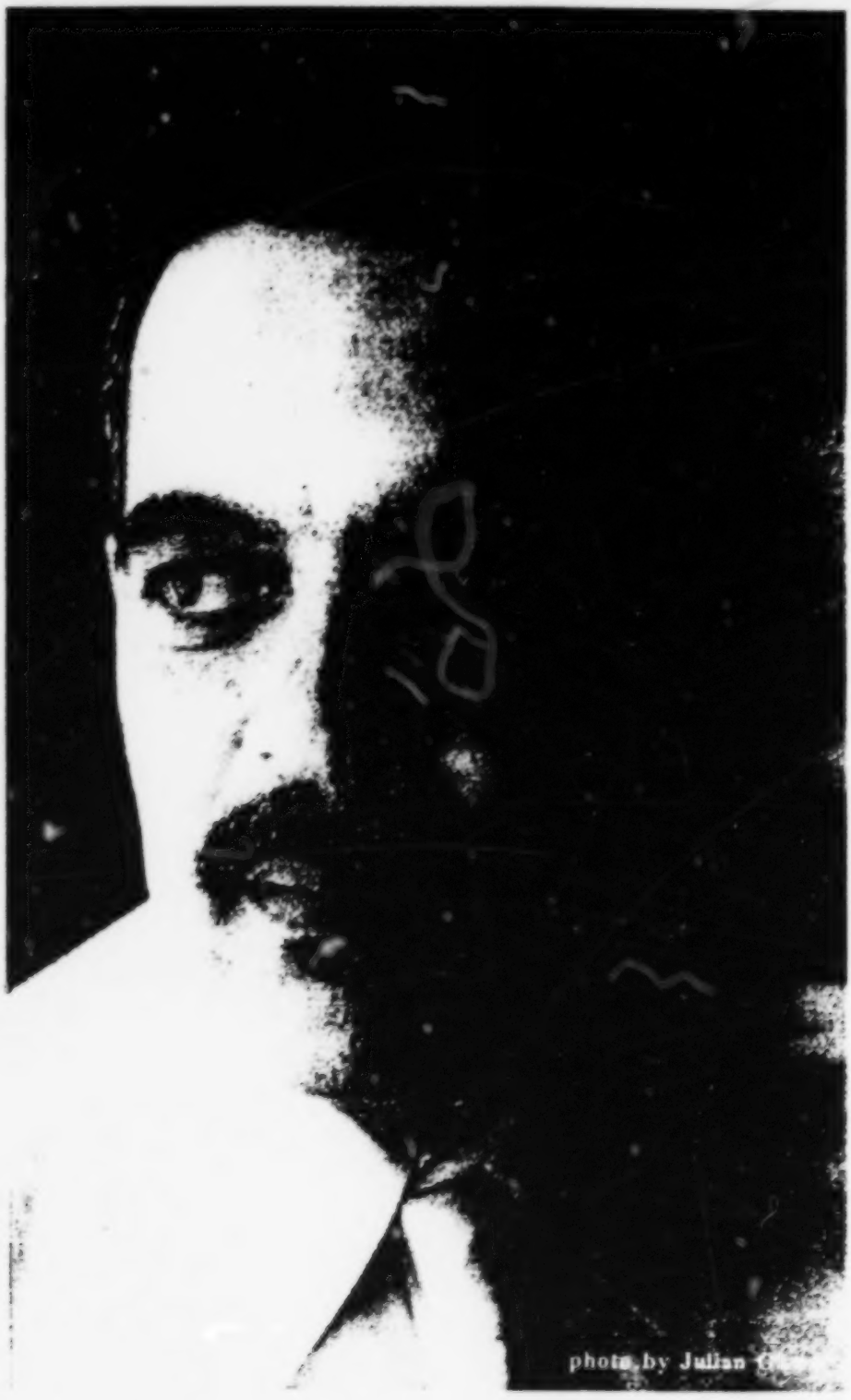
photo by Julian

HIGH AND COMPREHENSIVE STANDARDS

Many of the young people who attend CBO schools have not been in learning environments in which the adults had high expectations of them and, in reality, many of the students have been in school situations where they were not expected to succeed. The fact that many of these students left mainstream schools where they were unsuccessful, and then sought out different educational experiences, demonstrates that they are resilient and have not yet given up on themselves. They are looking for a learning environment where adults can provide the institutional and individual supports to look beyond the "at-risk," "delinquent," or "dropout" label that is often attached to them and help them to use their strengths to succeed.

CBO schools provide this type of learning environment by establishing a culture of high expectations and by holding students to high standards in all areas of growth and development. CBO schools are able to reengage young people in academics because they affirm each student's potential and because they address the whole student, linking literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking to nonacademic competencies such as employability and citizenship. Currently many of the CBO schools profiled are struggling to maintain their comprehensive developmental standards and diverse learning strategies in light of increasingly stringent academic standards

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and high-stakes testing that narrowly measure students' knowledge and abilities. While many CBO schools are involved in efforts to strengthen their academic offerings, they continue to struggle with the challenge of educating the young people who enter their schools with exceptionally low skill levels to adequately meet rigorous state standards and help them to move on to postsecondary education, employment, and family life in a timely fashion. This section explains the type of high and comprehensive standards that have helped students and schools meet this challenge, and that must be incorporated as a part of the standards-based reform movement.

Culture of High Expectations

In most of the schools profiled, young people – from the moment they walk in the door – are confronted by a culture of high expectations. Students first experience this culture during an initial interview and orientation process. The exact length and format varies from school to school, but generally staff and sometimes other students question prospective students about their background and aspirations. They explain the school environment, curriculum offerings and graduation requirements, and attendance and behavior rules and determine what particular kind of support – social or academic – the student may need to meet these expectations. This interview usually is followed by basic diagnostic testing. In some cases, parents are required to attend part of the interview process.

At several of the schools, students and parents are asked to sign agreements or contracts indicating their understanding of and commitment to the schools' expectations. In all cases, when schools are unable to provide the best services to suit a young person's needs, they commit to finding an appropriate placement for that student.

At YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, once prospective students complete the interview process, they go through a one-week "mental toughness" orientation period. During this week, staff work intensively with these students to help prepare them to meet the school's expectations and understand the services offered through a variety of role-playing, motivational, and team-building activities. Young people learn to comply with school attendance requirements and behavior rules, and are able to experience the types of lessons and projects they will participate in during classes and fieldwork. Students who complete this orientation successfully are formally accepted into the school in a final closing ceremony, helping them to gain both an initial sense of achievement and the hope that they will be able to meet the program's demanding graduation requirements.

At Shalom High School all staff and students participate in a week-long orientation, entitled "Building the Shalom Community." Principal Gwendolyn Spencer said the week was designed to help

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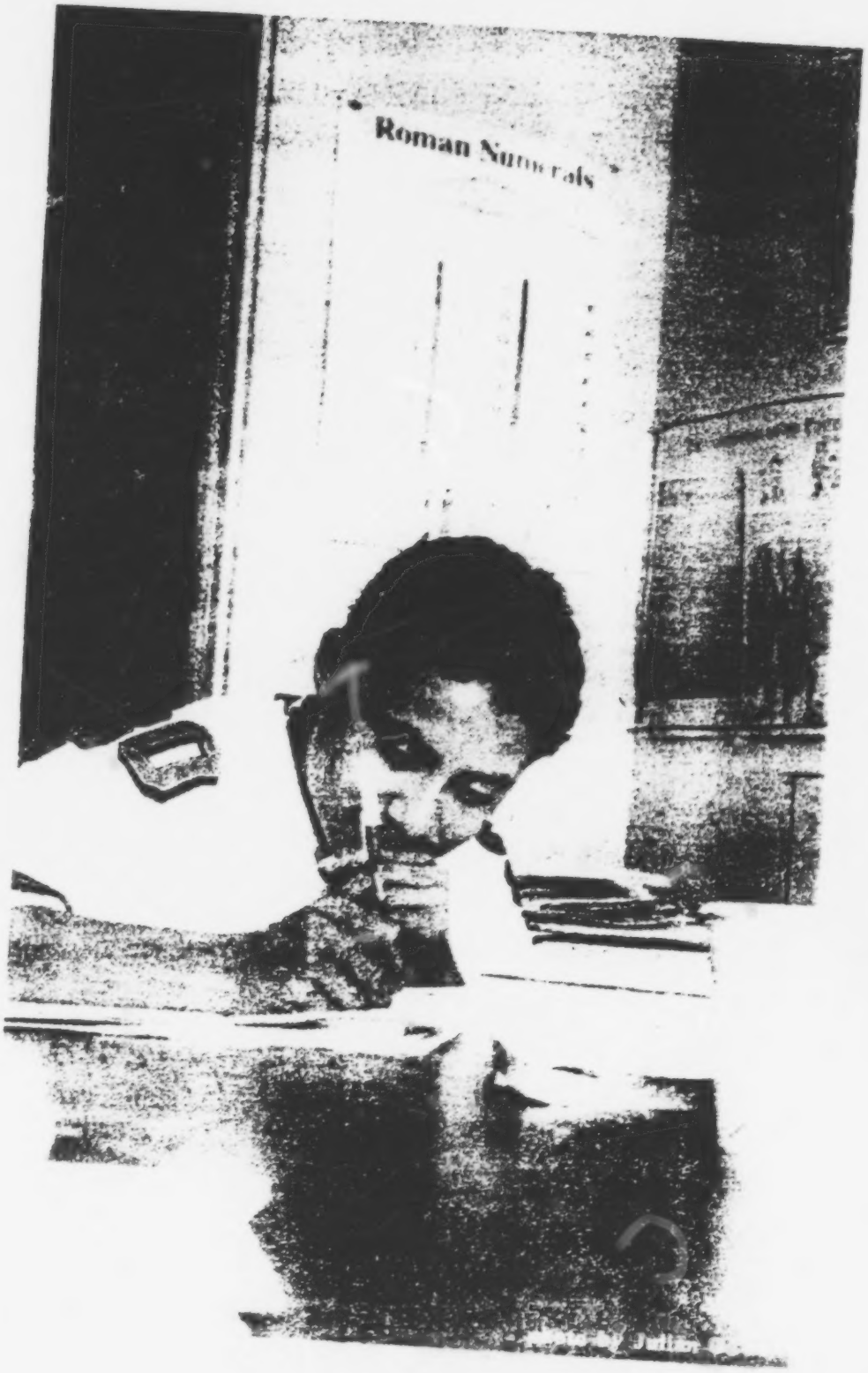
students understand "what it means to be a part of the community, what their responsibilities are, and what they can contribute." During the week, students and staff build relationships through activities such as gardening, conducting neighborhood clean-ups, and cooking lunch for the whole school. Graduates of the school and parents of some graduates speak with students about their experiences at Shalom, explaining the school's philosophy and expectations. Representatives from partner organizations such as a Lutheran church and an antipoverty agency, facilitate activities on conflict resolution and peer mediation and introduce students to the role of their organization in the community and school. Staff clearly explain the structure of the academic program, requirements for graduation, and classroom expectations. Students end the week by developing a "covenant" that details the expectations they will work toward, and depicting the covenant in a mural that everyone signs.

> ***"It is critical to bring the academic and developmental together. It's only when you bring school into the rest of their lives that they really become engaged in the learning."***
>
> *—Noreen Stack, El Centro del Cardenal High School*

These initial interviews and orientations are significant in establishing a culture of high expectations for students because

they are the beginning of the process by which CBO schools help students take responsibility for their own education. Schools make clear their commitment to providing students with the necessary information, opportunities, and supports and their expectation that students will carry out their responsibilities in pursuing their educational and personal goals. For some students, these interviews are the first time they have formally discussed and understood their academic standing and the requirements they must fulfill to graduate. For all students, the interviews and orientations require that they make and take ownership of their own personal choice to be a part of a particular school. "Deciding to come here and succeed means that they must make an internal shift to turn their lives around," explained Angel Rodriguez, now executive director of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School.

This level of expectation and support is new to many of the students at CBO schools. Chuck Cruse, a counselor at Grandview High School, noted, "These kids are used to having people not care enough to keep on them and follow through." Students' comments also supported this observation. "They actually notice that you're not here!" explained Robert, a first-year student at Arizona Call-A-Teen Center of Excellence Charter High School. Lydia, an 11th grade at American Indian OIC Career Immersion High School, emphasized, "They keep pushing us and they don't give up on us." Joe, a senior at Shalom



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High School, said, "It's all about responsibility. Here the responsibility is on you; you have a choice to graduate or not graduate."

Many students, some quickly and some more gradually, adopt these expectations for themselves and other students, thus perpetuating the culture of high expectations. Nearly every classroom at South Brooklyn Community Academy posts the "Community Goals" that students agreed on together at the beginning of the school year. Some of these goals are "Come to school every day," "Be a good example for the new students and community," and "Leave the past in the past and begin this year with a fresh start." Students themselves perpetuate the culture of high expectations when they have formal opportunities to contribute to the quality of the school environment (detailed later).

Success for the Whole Person

The expectations that many CBO schools set out for their students include and extend beyond academic content standards to other areas of growth and development. All of the CBO schools profiled see this as one of the keys to reengaging their students and holding them to high standards. "It is critical to bring the academic and developmental together," said Noreen Stack of Boston's El Centro del Cardenal High School during one of the Center's roundtables on CBO schools. "It's only

when you bring school into the rest of their lives that they really become engaged in the learning."

Students at CBO schools must meet city- and state-mandated academic requirements for graduation. This is a great challenge for the large numbers of students who arrive at CBO schools seriously behind in basic reading and math skills. Yet, CBO schools successfully reengage these students in education by linking academics to other areas of competency that youth development experts have shown are essential to a young person's successful transition to adulthood. How CBO schools connect the academic and the developmental inside and outside the classroom is explained later. Yet, the fact that CBO schools create standards for and assess nonacademic as well as academic competencies merits attention. This approach recognizes and values the diverse strengths and intelligence that young people possess, and it increases their chances of success by educating them to be competent in various areas of personal and community life.

While the labels given to the various competency standards vary among schools, there is a logical consistency in their content area, which often includes skills related to employability, physical and mental health, cognition, creativity, civic responsibility, and social and cultural communication. Students at Shalom High School, for example, must fulfill state

requirements in traditional subject areas and demonstrate mastery of 300 competencies cooperatively designed by students and teachers in communication, critical thinking and analysis, problem solving, valuing, environmental responsibility, and social interaction. Students at East Bay Conservation Corps Corpsmember Charter School must demonstrate proficiency in skills related to employability, citizenship and community membership, life skills, academics, and communication. Students at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice must show evidence of development and mastery of that school's 12 "Soul Standards": holism, development, creating community, collective self-help, mentoring, love and caring, safety, creativity, mastery, respect, unity through diversity, and peace and justice.

The following pages provide further examples of the various standards – in addition to academic subject standards – that some CBO schools hold their students to in different competency areas. Again, the competency area and standards listed are just one part of a larger set of competencies that schools expect their students to master. Some schools require mastery in all of their competency areas for graduation, while others encourage and assess mastery but do not attach requirements. In all cases, students come away with the understanding that their success in school and life depends on much more than good test scores.

Knowledge Integration

- Identify a social issue, define in writing at least two content areas that affect the issue, and specify how these content areas relate.
- Define a problem you are confronting, explain at least three options open to you, and justify these options by citing two authorities.
- Apply academic skills to personal daily life management, including health, consumer issues, personal finance, employment, household planning, and management.

Grandview High School

Milwaukee, WI

Valuing

Identification of one's own values and their source, and consideration of the values and needs of others.

- Trace your "roots" and describe how they affect your personal development.
- Identify constructive ways of dealing with anger.
- Take a critical stance on a controversial issue and make it public.
- Identify characteristics of change and differentiate between positive and negative ways of dealing with change.

Shalom High School

Milwaukee, WI

Citizenship

- Demonstrate an awareness of the interrelationship of the individual. society, and the environment.
- Use this awareness to enrich and protect all three.
- Apply civic. historical. geographical. and cultural knowledge and appreciation.

East Bay Conservation Corps Corpsmember Charter School
Oakland. CA

Interpersonal Competence

- Participate as a member of a team.
- Exercise leadership and teaches others.
- Negotiate to arrive at a decision.
- Work well with cultural diversity.

Arizona Call-A-Teen Center of Excellence Charter High School
Phoenix. AZ

Employability

- Understand various career paths. market trends. and job opportunities.
- Demonstrate self-management.
- Demonstrate an ability to solve problems.
- Use relevant technology. tools. and techniques.

East Bay Conservation Corps Corpsmember Charter School
Oakland. CA

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From Basic Skills to Mastery and the Future

For the many students who come to CBO schools having experienced a variety of academic levels and often lacking basic academic skills, a high school diploma is a high expectation. CBO school staff make it clear to all students, no matter what their past school performance may have been, that success is both possible and expected. All of the CBO schools we looked at offer and encourage students to work toward regular high school diplomas, though several offer a GED option if this better suits a particular student's situation. Yet, staff at many CBO schools work with students to go beyond acquiring basic skills to mastery of those skills. Students quickly learn that showing up and completing assignments, while important, is not enough.

"You can't just pass with Cs and Ds here, you actually have to know it and do the work," Dave, a student at American Indian OIC Career Immersion High School, told us. This is the case for students who participate in the Diploma Plus program used by many CBO schools and other alternative schools in New England, including the Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) University High School. Diploma Plus students work intensively to master basic academic skills (at least at the tenth-grade level) before moving on to the second phase of the program and must pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam to graduate. Teachers at ABCD University High School say that Diploma Plus has changed the conversation with students from,

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"How many points do I have?" to "Am I ready?" The program provides students with a clear understanding of what they need to know and be able to do to graduate, yet offers many options for demonstrating this knowledge, as explained later.

Facilitators (teachers) at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice say that helping students to work toward mastery involves helping students to get beyond grade mentality and learning to "never feel like you're done." "They have to do tasks over and over until they get them right and meet the standards," explains facilitator Josh Thomases. Acting principal Alfa Anderson says the "juxtaposition of building basic literacy skills and achieving mastery is difficult for many students," but the expectation of mastery must remain. Students at El Puente appear to be living up to this expectation, because they are meeting standards on the New York State High School Regents Exam and going on to college in large numbers.

Beyond basic academic skills and mastery, CBO schools hold their students to high expectations with regard to their futures. Exploring goals and gearing studies and other activities toward those goals is a priority at all of the schools we visited. Most of the schools have school-to-career programs that provide on-the-job training and career exploration. Others provide students, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college, opportunities to take college courses and classes that guide them through the

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college application process. Several schools also provide assistance to students in finding high-quality, high-wage jobs before and after graduation.

photo by Julian Okwu

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RELEVANT AND DIVERSE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Many students who attend the CBO schools profiled come from environments where there are few models of educational success to give school relevance and value. Moreover, many of these students previously attended high schools that were unable to provide either the instructional support needed to overcome low skill levels or a variety of learning opportunities to respond to different learning styles. The CBO schools profiled are able to draw on their familiarity with the young people and families who live in the community and the CBOs' links to community resources in addressing these challenges. CBO schools make education relevant by building strong connections between academic learning and issues pertinent to their students' realities and futures. They respond to students' diverse learning styles by providing a variety of opportunities to gain and use knowledge and skills inside and outside the classroom.

Active Learning without Boundaries

Because of their deep and widespread roots in the community, CBO schools are best able to address these multiple challenges by knocking down the walls between learning inside and outside the classroom. CBOs that are involved with the issues affecting the histories and lives of their students are able to connect these issues to academics in the classroom. CBOs also provide students

ample opportunity to apply their academic skills to learning situations outside the classroom in other organizations, their own neighborhoods, and the community at large. Whether learning opportunity takes place in or out of the classroom, CBO schools address the diverse ways students learn by incorporating active, project-based learning; by connecting learning across academic disciplines; and by individually addressing the specific academic needs of students.

Providing students with these diverse and relevant learning opportunities requires CBO schools not only to broaden the context in which learning occurs, but also to broaden the definition of teaching. Fieldwork supervisors, academic faculty, and counselors all must become facilitators of student learning in multiple settings. Counselors may teach relevant topics in the classroom, and teachers may join field supervisors at students' work sites to help teach academics related to job assignments. Volunteers and other community members offer their knowledge in many different venues, and students teach other students.

In all cases, CBO schools deploy a wide variety of teachers who can relate to their students' lives, and who, as YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School founder Taylor Frome put it, "want more out of students than passive learning." Some schools, such as Grandview High School and YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, have Education Director positions specifically devoted to

training staff – classroom teachers, work supervisors, and counselors – and to helping them to develop curriculum and methods that strengthen the connections between learning in multiple settings.

Assessment as a Tool of Engagement

Assessing the knowledge and competencies that students master through these learning opportunities is an ongoing and multifaceted process at CBO schools. Most do diagnostic testing when students enter the school, and all of the schools administer their state's standardized tests. Depending on the state in which they are located, some CBO schools (such as those in New York, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Arizona) currently face the challenges posed by high-stakes tests, and others are anticipating them. Several CBO schools administer their own school- or district-designed tests of basic skills competency as a requirement for graduation.

> ***"In most schools you memorize a formula. Here we learn to understand the formula, why we have to know it, and how you can use it."***
>
> *—James, El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice*

Yet, CBO schools do not rely on such tests as the sole or primary indicator of their students' learning and progress. In interviews and during our roundtable dialogues, CBO school educators

repeatedly emphasized that effective assessments must be performance-based and contextualized (as closely linked to the curriculum and teaching strategies as possible); they must provide individualized, ongoing, and constructive feedback; and they must develop students' abilities to reflect on and analyze their own progress. Assessments are used as tools to engage the students rather than to merely measure, reward, or penalize them.

At several of the CBO schools we visited, competency standards that students work toward are listed on the wall in an effort to make them aware at all times of the assessment criteria. Several schools profiled provide students with weekly or monthly progress reports that assess their level of performance in class, at the work site, or in other learning environments. At South Brooklyn Community Academy, counselors and teachers evaluate overall student progress biweekly, including academic performance and improvements in communication, decision making, problem solving, and goal setting. Together with field supervisors, students at East Bay Conservation Corps Corpsmember Charter School evaluate progress related to dependability, work site relationships, performance, and safety. This process involves self-evaluation by the students and short-term objectives setting for the next month. Students at East Bay have clear and precise monthly performance goals to reach in each of their five competency areas (academics, employability, life skills, citizenship, and

communication), and they earn certificates of mastery as they progress from one goal level to the next in each area.

Nearly all of the CBO schools we visited incorporate project-based and portfolio assessments. According to Mike Sack, former education director at YouthBuild Philadelphia, projects allow students to "apply their knowledge and skills to real-world situations using problem-solving strategies and ultimately creating meaningful and tangible products." Whether these projects take place in the classroom or "out in the field," assessing a student's performance on the project means evaluating his or her application of knowledge and skills rather than solely testing for acquisition of knowledge and skills. Likewise, portfolio development and presentation require students to participate in the assessment process. Students reflect critically on the quality of their work, the skills and knowledge they used to produce it, and the relevance of the work to their lives and futures. Presentation or defense of portfolios allows students to bring together the many different academic and nonacademic competencies they have been working to master and provide a picture of their educational and overall development in school – something that test scores and report cards alone cannot do.

James, a student at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, explained how students view this approach to learning and

assessment: "In most schools you memorize a formula. Here we learn to understand the formula, why we have to know it, and how you can use it."

How CBO schools implement diverse and relevant learning opportunities varies a great deal, and in many cases is more extensive than the mainstream environments the students come from, as illustrated by the following examples.

ABCD University High School

Students who study in the Diploma Plus program at ABCD University High School (and at several other CBO schools) work intensively to strengthen basic academic skills and show competency through a combination of teacher-designed tests, projects, student presentations, an initial Presentation Portfolio, and other assessments. Students also complete a career exploration seminar. Successful students advance to the program's Plus Phase in which they complete a minimum of one college course, a career-related internship or community service experience, and three major projects, including a community action project and an autobiography. ABCD students also take elective seminars in areas such as drama, music, computers, politics, peer leadership, and wealth building. At the end of the Plus Phase, students present a Graduation Portfolio that includes examples of their best work in each area and critical reflection pieces on each portfolio entry. Students present these portfolios to an audit committee made up

of faculty; students; representatives from the Commonwealth Corporation, which administers the Diploma Plus program; and representatives from collaborating organizations, including the Boston Private Industry Council and Bunker Hill Community College.

American Indian OIC Career Immersion High School

Students at the American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center (AIOIC) Career Immersion High School can earn a high school diploma and, in some cases, college credit, while participating in compensated work experiences in health, business, engineering/manufacturing, and information technology. As part of the health pathway, AIOIC has partnered with St. Mary's University of Minnesota to train students to become certified nursing assistants/home health aides. Students in this program must complete the Employment Aptitude Program, which includes skill development in math, reading, speech, and writing; critical thinking; wellness and family issues; vocational counseling; and workforce transition. Students learn physical and psychosocial care skills in a hands-on lab and then apply these skills in clinical experiences at local nursing homes and hospitals. During the 120 days of training, the AIOIC school-to-career program pays for books, tuition, uniforms, and state certification exam fees, and helps students to find jobs. Since 1996, more than 100 AIOIC students have completed this program, with approximately 65 percent

obtaining jobs in the health care field, where they earn as much as $9-$12 per hour.

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice

Seniors at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice undertake an active research project over the course of a year in social studies class on a topic related to peace and justice. The class of 1999 studied the history of economic development in various New York City neighborhoods, including its own community of Williamsburg. This spurred students to investigate patterns of lending discrimination by analyzing Home Mortgage Disclosure Act and Community Reinvestment Act data they obtained from three major banks. Students built on this research in an individual final paper while working to master elements of the writing process, including source identification and analysis, thesis development and proof, organizational and grammatical conventions, voice editing, and rewriting. Students then combined and detailed their findings and recommendations in a 35-page report that El Puente used to inform the community and submitted to Representative Nydia Velasquez, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Banking and Financial Services.

Grandview High School

Students at Grandview, many of whom are parenting teens, work toward competency in traditional academic content areas and have access to elective classes that directly address their current or

impending adult responsibilities. Such classes include employability skills, business careers, family and consumer education, child services, child development and relationships, coping skills, and personal economics. In personal economics, students participate in a simulated year of employment, earning a "paycheck" with salary based on class attendance and performance. In the process, students learn how to write resumes and cover letters, budget living expenses, balance checkbooks, fill out tax forms, manage the apartment rental process, plan trips, manage credit card use, and invest money. Grandview's counseling staff teach elective classes in coping skills, engaging students in activities and discussions related to communication skills, values, and decision-making strategies that support healthy relationships, nonviolence, and anger management. As a final project in one coping skills class, students plan activities and implement a lesson plan that teaches elementary students to make decisions based on nonviolence.

San Francisco Conservation Corps/California Charter Academy

Students at San Francisco Conservation Corps/California Charter Academy incorporate their classroom studies with daily compensated fieldwork in construction, restoration, landscaping, recycling, building rehabilitation, and park maintenance. For example, last year students applied the geometry principles they were studying in math class to their fieldwork restoring a playground for children at a low-income housing project. Students removed

the old playground equipment, poured a new concrete equipment base, resurfaced the base with safe, synthetic playground mats, and assembled and installed new equipment. When undertaking these tasks, students worked closely with their math teacher and crew leader at the site to apply geometric and other mathematical principles learned in class, such as calculating the area of triangles and squares while laying out playground mats and equipment.

Shalom High School

Students at Shalom High School work toward their diploma by demonstrating competency in five state-mandated content areas (English, math, science/health, history/social studies, and life skills/humanities) and by mastering 300 specific skills in five cross-content areas: communication, critical thinking and analysis, problem solving, valuing, environmental responsibility, and social interaction. All students who enter Shalom receive a handbook listing the 300 skills and are responsible for determining how and when they demonstrate each skill. Skills, which are developed jointly and updated regularly by a committee of teachers and students, range from basic to technical and complex and may be demonstrated through class and individual work, outside internships, work, and service learning experiences. Faculty advisors meet with students once a week to verify and discuss skills acquisition. Advisors also guide Shalom seniors as they develop their Defense of Graduation Portfolios, also a graduation requirement, which must include examples of their best work in the five academic content

areas, a self-assessment/postgraduation plan, and a senior elective project that highlights the student's talent and abilities. Students must defend their portfolios and readiness to graduate before a committee of staff, faculty, community members, and another student.

YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School

Students at YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School study science twice a week at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education. Science teachers work with Schuylkill Center staff to design projects that enable students, many of whom have very limited experience with the natural outdoors, to investigate scientific theories and methods in the natural environment. In one project, groups of students work together outside over a trimester to produce a comprehensive study of a pond ecosystem. Scientific concepts such as migration, interspecies relationships, adaptations, weather, food chains, the water cycle, global warming, and meteorology take on meaning for students as they inventory the flora and fauna, perform water quality tests, and survey the physical characteristics of the pond. Students draw on a range of skills to produce a comprehensive portfolio of their work, including mathematical calculations, journal writing, photography, drawing, and poetry. Students work in teams to build these portfolios and give oral presentations at the end of each trimester to a panel of teachers, administrators, and outside guests.

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PERSONALIZED AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

In many ways, personalized and flexible learning environments are the cornerstone that enables CBO schools to implement the other four principles (high and comprehensive standards, relevant and diverse learning, opportunities, supports and services for effective learning and opportunities to make a contribution) included here. It can be difficult to hold students to high and comprehensive expectations or to provide them with the support services they need if administrators, faculty, and staff have not first established caring, trusting, and positive relationships with the students and their families. Providing students with diverse and relevant learning experiences and opportunities to make a contribution are only possible if systems, administrators, and teachers can be creative and responsive, and if schedules and procedures can be adjusted to different learning experiences. The practices and policies that make for personalized and flexible learning environments are not optional to the effective education CBO schools provide. Rather, as students and staff at CBO schools asserted, they are the fundamental prerequisites to engaging young people in their own education.

Small and Beyond: Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

Each of the CBO schools profiled has fewer than 250 students enrolled at any given time; across the group the average

enrollment is 143 students, with an average student/teacher ratio of 15:1. Small overall school sizes and low student-teacher ratios are a powerful combination that, as much recent education reform research has indicated, allow for increased individualized attention, instruction, and support. We heard from students over and over about the crucial difference that regular individual attention from teachers made in their learning. Yenom, a student at Grandview High School, told us: "Here they help you one-on-one and don't stop helping you until you understand."

Beyond this individual attention to academic needs, however, students and teachers consistently reported that close relationships – between students and staff, students and students, staff and staff, parents and schools – were primary factors in making their CBO schools effective learning environments. Family, relationships, and caring were undoubtedly the most common words used to describe nearly all of the schools profiled. Based on the testimony of the many students and staff with whom we spoke, it seems impossible to overstate the significance of positive, caring relationships to educational success for all students. Students and staff make the point best.

Jared, a student at ***Arizona Call-A-Teen***: "This school is more like a family. The level of respect and communication is high, and

they make you feel wanted."

Gwendolyn Spencer, principal of ***Shalom High School***: "The personal relationships can be their reason to want to come even when they hit bumps . . . the relationship with the person is the relationship with the school."

Hector, a student at ***Grandview High School***: "The teachers pay more attention to you here. They care about you and want to be involved in your life. You can go to them anytime with your personal problems, too."

Adjoa Jones de Almeida, a facilitator at ***El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice***: "You can't do anything in the classroom unless you have established a personal relationship with the students. Building those relationships allows for students to build trust and openness to learning."

Arnaldo, a student at ***Shalom High School***: "This school is based on the community and the kids. We trust one another and you know that you're safe, and that makes a big difference. A lot of people think that alternative schools are for bad people. It's not about that. It's about caring and support."

Kurt Chang, a field supervisor at ***East Bay Conservation Corps***: "The crews are like family. They [students] contact me at all

hours. We are trying to nurture a relationship to help keep them working."

As these comments indicate, small school size alone is not sufficient. Rather, it is the purposeful development of personal and supportive relationships that helps to reengage so many young people in their education. CBOs bring particular assets to the operation of schools that help them to personalize the learning environment for their students. All of the schools profiled grew out of local accomplishments of each CBO in such areas as social justice, civil rights, economic development, conservation, employment and training, youth development, and health and nutrition. While connections to the community take on many different forms based on a particular CBO's mission, in all cases these relationships have been in place first. This connection provides young people with a sense of continuity that extends from the community to the family and school.

> ***"This school is based on the community and the kids. We trust one another and you know that you're safe, and that makes a big difference. A lot of people think that alternative schools are for bad people. It's not about that. It's about caring and support."***
>
> *— Arnaldo, Shalom High School*

El Puente, for example, is a major force working for social justice and development with the families and citizens of the Williamsburg and Bushwick neighborhoods of Brooklyn. Most of its staff live in the neighborhood, have considerable knowledge of the people and issues confronting students at their Academy for Peace and Justice, and work with these students and their families on issues affecting all of their lives. A large human services agency that operates a network of programs in Boston's low-income neighborhoods, Action for Boston Community Development has well-established connections to families whose young people would benefit from the smaller and more nurturing learning environment at their University High School. Seeds of Health, Inc., operates five Women, Infants, and Children clinics in Milwaukee and is able to link the young people and families they serve there to its elementary schools and high school (Grandview High School). Often, parenting teens attend the high school while their young children attend the elementary school.

CBO schools often work with older adolescents, many of whom have families of their own or may be living independently, but most schools intentionally build connections with family members or other significant adults in their students' lives. In several schools, parents or guardians are part of the initial interview process. Along with the prospective student, they learn about the opportunities and services available at the school and the schools' expectations of the students. Most of the schools maintain regular contact with

family members regarding student progress and may involve them in schoolwide social or service activities. In some cases, family members participate in other aspects of the CBO's community work.

All of these efforts help to foster a greater sense of ownership and connection to the school for parents, and demonstrate to young people that there is a network of caring adults who want to support them in their efforts to complete their high school education. It is not surprising that all of the schools profiled reported many word-of-mouth student referrals via family members and friends. "Our parents feel cared about and are not intimidated to come here," explained Perry Price, education administrator for the Minneapolis Urban League, which operates the Street Academy; Fresh Start Academy I, serving grades pre-K through three; and Fresh Start Academy II, serving grades K-6. "We have excellent cultural communication with parents here because we are basically an African-American organization serving their needs, as well as the needs of other parents and students of color."

A Web of Formal and Informal Connections

Of course, small school size and low student/teacher ratios greatly facilitate establishment of the close, caring relationships in CBO schools. Staff and faculty at CBO schools build on these community and family relationships to create personalized learning environments for students. Whatever a particular staff

member's role, he or she is expected to relate to students in a personal and supportive way. Although it remains a challenge, CBO schools work to recruit staff who reflect students' ethnic or cultural background, and are often able to employ staff who have experience working with young people from at-risk backgrounds in a variety of contexts. CBO schools bring together students, teachers, counselors, fieldwork instructors, and administrators in a variety of informal and formal connections so that students have as many opportunities as possible to form strong relationships that help to keep them engaged in school.

CBO schools, depending on available funds and organization, use a variety of formal strategies to connect each student to a positive, caring adult. What many of these strategies share, however, is a multilayered approach that provides students with many possible points of contact. These strategies do not leave it to luck or chance that students connect with an adult. "There are very few students here without a caring, positive adult whom they are connected to. That adult is responsible for supporting students through their struggles," said Mike Sack, former education director at YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School.

Some schools use team teaching to increase their ability to reach each student, and assign each student a "mentor teacher" who oversees the student's progress toward goals in the

individual education plans that several schools maintain for each student. In most cases, students do not rely solely on the teachers they see every day in classes for adult support. Counselors in many CBO schools are, as one student at South Brooklyn Community Academy put it, "not just like your regular counselor who you never see anyway." In many cases, counselors see all students regularly, whether through individual meetings, overseeing counseling groups, or teaching classes related to life skills.

Most CBO schools reinforce these positive student-adult relationships with regular, structured communication about students and their progress. As described in subsequent sections, students receive formal, ongoing, and constructive feedback on their work and behavior from teachers and counselors, and many participate in regular self-assessments. Providing students with this information in the context of nurturing relationships appears to have a great impact on helping students to take responsibility for their own education. Mayra Lopez, program director of South Brooklyn Community Academy, stated, "We are responsible for providing students the information that they need to make good choices." Staff in most schools reported that regular meetings that bring together those working with students in different capacities are key to giving students complete information on their progress, and to sharing what works. Finally, counseling or peer support groups

in some schools help to build positive relationships among students, and regular all-school meetings and activities further promote a sense of community.

Following are examples of how all of these layers of relationships come together at several CBO schools.

YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School

Students at YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School are grouped in teams that alternate weekly class and construction work schedules. All teams come together at daily schoolwide morning meetings for announcements and motivational activities. At the work site, each team is led by an adult instructor who trains students in construction and employability skills. Work site instructors are trained to have mentor relationships with students and to help them build relationships among the teams. Vincent Smith, who spent 15 years in the construction field before becoming an instructor at YouthBuild Philadelphia, said that instructors "put most focus on the development of the students themselves by teaching them responsibility and how to work together productively." The school's highly interactive project-based classroom instruction also allows students to develop close, positive relationships with teachers and other students in academic and service-learning classes. YouthBuild's seven professional case managers are the other central adults in the lives of YouthBuild students, meeting individually with

them for 30 minutes biweekly and in group counseling and support sessions. Case managers emphasize "personal responsibility and job readiness" while helping students to develop and address Life Management Plans and coordinate the support services they need. Case managers, classroom teachers, and work site instructors meet together weekly to discuss issues facing specific students and strategies to address those issues; they also participate in a weeklong in-house retreat.

Grandview High School

Each Grandview student belongs to a mentoring group that meets for 30 minutes every morning and is facilitated by a classroom teacher. Teachers encourage the approximately 15 students in each group to build rapport with one another and the teacher by encouraging discussion of "whatever we have on our minds," as one student put it, from personal or school issues to current events and future plans. Additionally, students connect with one of Grandview's five support services counselors in a variety of ways. Counselors make daily phone calls and occasional home visits when students are absent, conduct individual meetings with students to help them resolve issues and access services, help students with post-high school plans, including college applications, and teach life skills-related classes and leadership courses such as ROPE. Grandview teachers meet weekly with counselors to discuss the students in their mentoring groups. Teachers and counselors alike see

these meetings as crucial to ensuring that all students get the individual attention they need, and that all staff understand what works in helping students to fulfill the goals in their individual education plans. Jodi Stein, a consumer education teacher, insisted that "small isn't enough. We have to work really hard to support one another among teachers, administration, and counselors."

South Brooklyn Community Academy

All students at South Brooklyn work closely with one of four advocate counselors to assess their academic progress, facilitate communication with teachers, resolve personal issues affecting their attendance and academic progress, access necessary resources, and explore career and college opportunities. Students meet with their counselors individually and in twice-weekly facilitated peer groups of about 20 students. Peer group activities and discussions focus on topics students deal with: health awareness, self-esteem, relationships and sexuality, family and independent living, and school-related issues. Counselors incorporate students' ideas into activities and encourage students to help one another resolve problems. Students in one peer group said that advocate counselors are "more like friends who help you and encourage you to do well," and that peer groups "bring everyone closer together and help us to work out small problems. We can be our true selves here." Advocate counselors consult teachers on students' class

behavior and academic performance and provide students with biweekly progress reports. The entire school participates in a monthly "community meeting" where students and staff cofacilitate planning of community activities and discussion of issues affecting the quality of life in the school for everyone.

The impact of a highly personalized learning environment is readily apparent in all of the CBO schools profiled. They are welcoming and safe, and students move easily through their schools, often talking informally with teachers or other school staff. While many students come from communities where they frequently have to deal with violence, none of their CBO schools has metal detectors and security guards are rare. Staff and students at all of the CBO schools profiled reported little need for such precautions because of the general lack of physical violence.

> ***"[Instructors] put most focus on the development of the students themselves by teaching them responsibility and how to work together productively."***
>
> *—Vincent Smith, YouthBuild Philadelphia*

Mayra Lopez, program director at South Brooklyn, said that this lack of violence can be attributed to the strong relationships at the school and the fact that students are "invested in this

being a safe place." One of her students supported this assertion, saying, "We don't have fights here because we talk things through. It's not like were inmates." Most of the CBO schools have explicit expectations of how conflicts and tensions should be dealt with, and students know that there are caring adults available to help them work through difficult situations. The cultivation of a personalized learning environment is central to creating a school where students feel safe, are able to concentrate on their education, and where they sense the expectation and involvement of adults who know them and believe they can succeed.

Flexibility from the System to Classroom Level

CBO schools add flexibility to public education systems by providing personalized educational options for students who have not succeeded in mainstream high schools. Providing such personalized and flexible options is vital to a system's success in meeting the educational needs of as many students as possible. The more high-quality educational options that exist, the fewer students the system is likely to fail.

While CBO schools are a part of the public education system and have to conform to an array of requirements, most enjoy greater autonomy and flexibility in their operations than other high schools because of their contract, alternative, or charter status. The amount of autonomy varied among the 11 CBO

schools profiled. Most of the schools' administrators have greater flexibility with regard to hiring staff and teachers, though two schools are required to hire district-certified teachers only. Greater flexibility in hiring allows CBO school administrators to hire the variety of individuals and professionals already described whose experiences help them to build supportive relationships with students, and to engage students in a range of learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom.

Depending on the district, charter, or contract requirements they operate under, most of the CBO schools profiled exercise flexibility in the length of their overall educational programs, number of school days, and in-class times. This flexibility, exercised within the context of state graduation requirements, enables schools to accommodate the diverse life circumstances of many young people who hope to earn a high school diploma. Students are not forced to drop out or resort to a GED because they are older than the average or have responsibilities as parents, wage earners, or both. Some CBO schools use this flexibility to allow students to move toward graduation at their own pace, earning credits according to competencies demonstrated versus time-in-seat. In some cases, students can complete a diploma program in one year, in other cases two years if all competencies and other requirements are satisfied according to established mastery standards. While many students at CBO schools take longer than the minimum amount of time to earn their degrees, the possibility of graduating based on

the knowledge they demonstrate rather than the time they put in is an important motivating factor for those who have already experienced serious delays and interruptions in their education.

Greater control over the way school days are organized allows administrators and teachers to ensure that time is used in the most efficient ways so that their students remain engaged in their education. CBO schools with a strong work-based learning component may alternate weeks that students spend in the classroom and at the work site, or may offer classes in the late afternoon following work experiences. Arizona Call-A-Teen Center of Excellence Charter High School offers students a flexible four-hour morning or four-hour afternoon schedule to accommodate the work schedules of many of them who are helping to support their families. Students may choose to attend classes on the full-day schedule if they are in good academic standing. Grandview's Homebound Instruction Program allows students who give birth during the school year to adjust to parenthood while continuing their education.

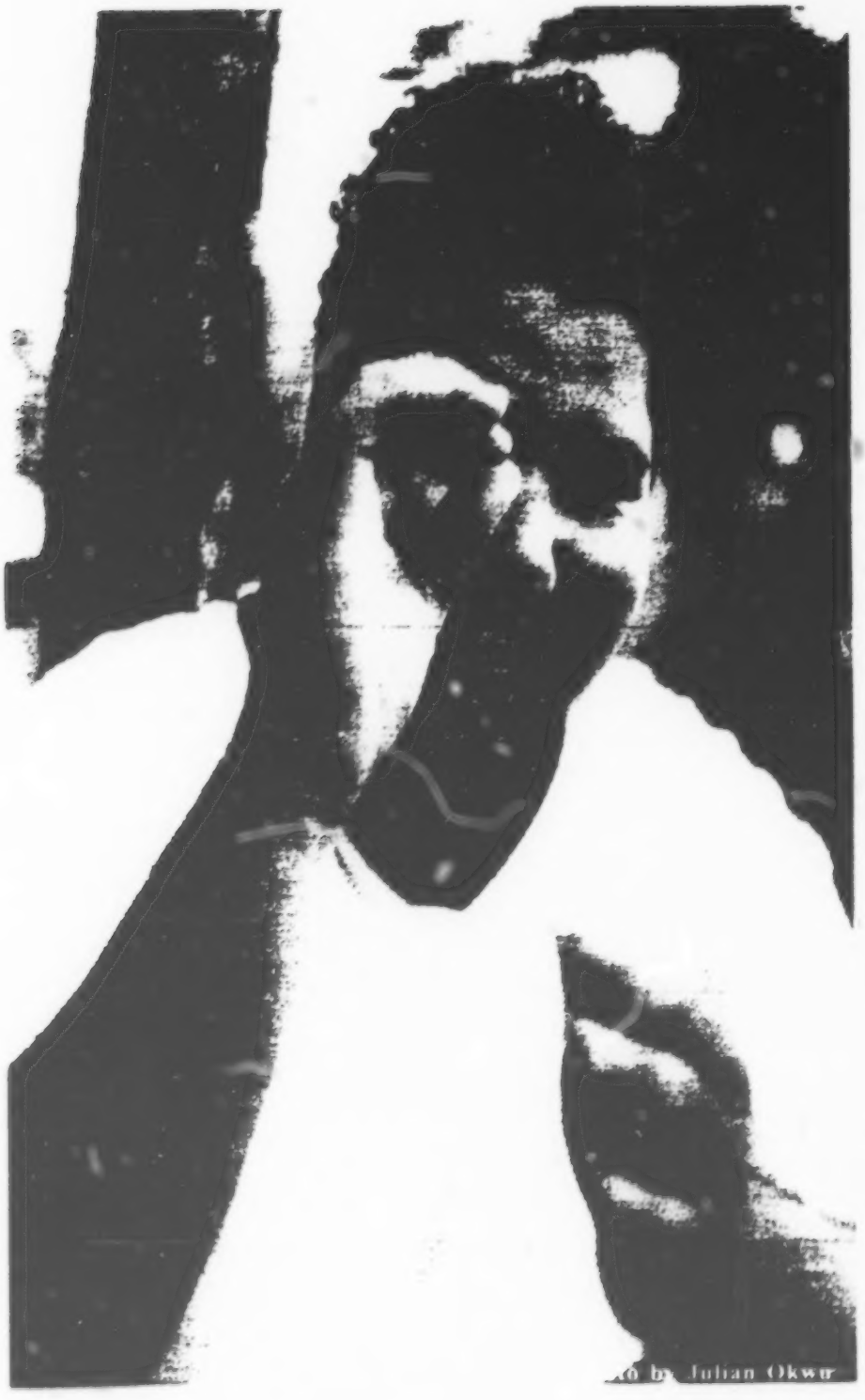
Several CBO schools have used such flexibility to adopt block schedules that lengthen class times anywhere from 80 to 120 minutes versus the traditional 50 minutes. Staff at schools with block schedules stressed the crucial difference this has made for structuring classes and projects that engage students and allow for a mix of cooperative and independent learning that

promotes deeper understanding. Many of the diverse and relevant learning opportunities described earlier would be difficult to undertake during traditional class times. Though many teachers at Grandview were concerned about students' ability to adapt to longer classes, they found that the greater variety of activities they were able to undertake gave students "more opportunities to be successful, to finish something in one day and feel that sense of accomplishment." Moreover, several Grandview teachers observed that longer class periods allowed them to be more "creative and relaxed," responding to individual student needs and actually spending less time on classroom and behavior management.

This flexibility in organizing the school day also allows CBO schools to use school time better to build the positive, caring relationships they know are crucial to effective student learning. As discussed earlier, individual and group counseling sessions, team-building activities, and all-school meetings are regularly scheduled parts of these schools' calendars. "We wouldn't be able to do what we do here in most schools. We would be doing paperwork instead of meeting the kids and really getting to know them," said Debbie Guardiola, a social worker and member of the Grandview High School support services staff. Shalom High School principal Gwendolyn Spencer took advantage of this flexibility to reorganize an entire week's schedule at the beginning of the school year when new students

were having difficulty adapting to the school's structure and expectations. That week of relationship building among all students and staff proved so successful that the school established the beginning of the year "Building the Shalom Community" orientation described earlier.

Finally, because staff at CBO schools get to know their students well and can draw on CBOs' wider services and resources, they are able to be responsive to young people's individual choices about their education and future. Several of the CBO schools profiled grew out of and simultaneously operate adult education programs offering GED preparation and technical training classes. Students can be connected easily with these different educational options while still benefiting from the important relationships and connections the CBO offers them.


Julian Okwu

SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Young people need a wide variety of supports and services to get to school every day, learn effectively, complete their diploma requirements, and transition successfully to adult roles in the worlds of work, higher education, family, and community. Yet, too many young people come to school with some of their most basic needs unmet, including adequate nutrition, health care, and housing. Poverty appears to be a key factor in this situation, with 72 percent of young people, on average, qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch at the 11 CBO schools profiled. Many young people deal with a range of personal, family, and developmental challenges that often interfere with their school attendance and performance. CBO schools recognize that a broad range of services and supports can significantly affect young people's ability to learn and succeed.

As a standard part of their work with young people and other community members, CBOs routinely provide comprehensive support or make direct referrals to services and resources that fill a variety of students' (and their families') needs. CBOs that operate schools are often familiar providers of resources related to health care, employment, housing, child care, after-school activities, language instruction, transportation, counseling, legal assistance, and more. Most significant, the positive, caring relationships that CBO schools foster with students and their families, described

earlier, establish a personalized foundation for providing these services and for helping young people to make connections to the support services they need.

"We don't just say 'Go over to that other division and get some services'," explained LaRue Fields, chief program officer of the Minneapolis Urban League. The mentor teachers, field instructors, or counselors with whom students already have established relationships provide or directly link them to services dealing with very personal issues. As a result, CBO schools staff reported, students' experiences with support services are usually more effective because they are built into the fabric of the school and organization, and are not associated with an anonymous counselor or bureaucratic agency. Moreover, CBO school staff can assess students' needs for support services continuously, and they can do so within the schools' context of high expectations and personal responsibility.

Getting to and Focusing on School

Regular and punctual attendance is often the first critical area in which many students at CBO schools need support. Staff at all of the CBO schools profiled consider an integral part of their work to be helping students to overcome ingrained patterns of irregular attendance, whether due to disengagement from school, personal and family difficulties, or a combination of these and other factors. Most schools approach this issue with a high degree of vigilance

and responsiveness, constantly working with students to understand and resolve any issues affecting their attendance and emphasizing the importance of regular attendance habits to future job success.

At most schools the counseling or administrative staff have daily responsibility for verifying student attendance in the morning and calling the homes of absent students to ascertain what can be done to help them get to school that day. In some cases, counselors or other staff provide wake-up calls and transportation or arrange for the emergency child care or medical appointment assistance that will facilitate the students' attendance. Counselors or administrative staff may visit a student's home to assess difficulties and consult with the student and his or her family. While providing attendance reinforcement, staff also encourage students to take personal responsibility for their regular attendance. At some schools, the young people are expected to call and inform the school if they are going to be absent, just as they would in a job situation.

Arizona Call-A-Teen's Center of Excellence Charter High School's bilingual community resource liaison, Nancy Torres, is responsible for determining student and family service needs during initial interviews and for verifying student attendance every morning. Ms. Torres, whom students refer to as "Mother Nancy," calls the homes of absent students and maintains regular contact with all of the students' families, connecting them to the school and to

whatever community resources they need. Students at most of the CBO schools profiled frequently mentioned the significance of this type of ongoing attendance support. "Teachers here care whether you're here — they call your house! And they care whether you learn," Brian, a student at Shalom High School, told us. Latoya, a student at South Brooklyn Community Academy, said that her primary achievement at the school was "learning to commit myself to attendance so that I could focus long enough to earn good grades."

At several schools, daily attendance reinforcement is linked to the comprehensive counseling and support services strategy that provides interventions at all levels, helping students deal with the basic and more complex social and psychological issues that affect their performance in school. In many cases such supports go well beyond the baseline of what mainstream schools provide. Case managers at YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School initially help students to develop individual Life Management Plans for a comprehensive personal assessment of their goals, self-esteem, substance abuse, sexual health and practices, family and relationships, educational history, employment history, medical history, health insurance, finances, and legal issues. Students are able to coordinate the services they need to deal with any of these issues through their case manager, and they further address these issues in regular individual counseling sessions as well as support groups on topics such as personal relationships, gender-based

life skills, sexual health, rape and sexual abuse prevention, substance abuse, and parenting.

Counselors at ABCD University High School meet with students individually, offer young men's and young women's counseling groups to address self-esteem issues, and oversee schoolwide participation in an Outward Bound activity. Counselors are readily able to connect students and their families to ABCD's wide array of services, including Head Start and other child care, welfare-to-work programs, emergency and low-income housing and rental assistance, fuel assistance, family planning and health education programs, and summer employment programs.

> ***"Teachers here care whether you're here — they call your house! — And they care whether you learn."***
>
> *—Brian, Shalom High School*

All students at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice participate in an ongoing individual and collective self-help process, referred to as the Holistic Individualized Process (HIP), which is at the core of El Puente's educational mission. HIP supports young people taking responsibility for their own lives and leads to personal growth and leadership development in their school and wider community. Students participate weekly in "support circles," overseen by facilitation (teaching) and support services staff. Each

staff member works consistently with the same group of ten students, helping them to discuss issues of community and individual wellness and goals. Students also have individual meetings with their staff mentor, maintain a journal as a self-assessment tool, and develop an individualized action plan that deals with their personal, education, and community issues. The school's support services coordinator, who is a CBO staff member, connects students to crisis intervention services when necessary.

Minneapolis Urban League Street Academy's four counselors work closely with students on a range of developmental issues. Educational counselors work with each student on academic goals and progress, and other counselors offer individual and group counseling with regard to substance abuse, violence, self-esteem, and behavior management. Students who are dealing with the juvenile justice system participate four days a week in a support and leadership group facilitated by a school counselor who communicates with the students' probation officers and social workers. Counselors also link students to this large human service organization's resources, including emergency housing, food, health care and legal services, employment preparation and placement, and health education.

A full-time social worker at East Bay Conservation Corpsmember Charter School regularly communicates with students and their work site instructors about issues affecting students' lives, and

connects students to housing, child care, legal, and health resources. All students must complete workshops in a variety of life skills areas, including sex education, parenting, nutrition, and substance abuse. School staff work with experts from local organizations familiar with these issues to design and deliver the workshops.

Supporting Academics During and After School

Small learning environments with strategic connections to adults, active and project-based learning, and ongoing constructive assessments enable CBO schools to provide students with a high degree of individualized academic support and regular feedback about their progress. This is a powerful combination for reengaging students in their own education and helping those who have experienced failure in school to achieve success and earn a diploma. Nonetheless, some students face particular challenges, such as limited English proficiency and learning disabilities, so they require additional supports to enable them to fulfill their learning potential.

Several CBO schools profiled provide in-house academic resources for students with special needs and integrate these services into their program. For example, Shana Tompa, a part-time special education teacher at Arizona Call-A-Teen Center of Excellence Charter High School, provides services according to an inclusion model. She works with classroom teachers to design lessons and provide resources that address the needs of the

school's ten to 12 (on average) special education students. Mrs. Tompa observed that young people labeled "emotionally disabled," in particular, have found success in this CBO school's unique environment, and that the CBO's health and employment and training resources make it an ideal place for transitioning special education students. YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School has two special education teachers who provide instruction, primarily addressing reading- and math-related disabilities, according to an inclusion model. Approximately 25 percent of YouthBuild Philadelphia's students regularly qualify for special education services. Both Minneapolis Urban League Street Academy and Arizona Call-A-Teen Center of Excellence Charter High School employ Title I specialists who provide additional literacy and math support, including computer-based instruction, for students in need.

CBO schools without these resources on site work with students who have been identified for special education services and their parents to determine the optimal learning environment for that student. In many cases, CBO school staff reported, the schools' innovative and individualized approaches meet the student needs outlined in their Special Education Individual Education Plan (IEP). In other cases, CBO schools rely on local district special education professionals on an as-needed basis or work with parents and students to identify a school that would better meet the students' needs. Daniel Grego, director of educational services at TransCenter for Youth, which operates Shalom High School and

two other schools, remarked, "Our schools work with young people who have been labeled in one way or another, but we have no preconceived notion of who they are and what they are supposed to be able to achieve. We ask them to identify and develop the gifts and assets they have, and work with them to improve areas in which they aren't as strong."

Several CBO schools employ bilingual faculty and staff who are able to support the needs of English language learners (ELLs). San Francisco Conservation Corps/California Charter Academy, which has a consistently high ELL enrollment, offers English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and bilingual Spanish/English in multiple subjects at various levels. Some schools, such as El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, employ a number of bilingual staff who are able to address students' language issues individually in regular classes. Other schools are able to link students to ESL classes offered by the parent CBO, such as Action for Boston Community Development.

In addition to structured individualized academic support during the school day, some CBO schools offer students additional academic support and enrichment after school. At several schools, teachers maintain after-school office hours for students to seek extra help or guidance, and nearly all make computer labs and classrooms available for students to do individual or group work. Both staff and students at these schools indicated that the strong

relationships and personalized school environments made "staying after school" a positive and comfortable experience that more students were likely to take advantage of. Staff at South Brooklyn Community Academy noted that even graduates visit during these hours to speak with their former teachers or use computer facilities for their college assignments.

Students at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice take advantage of the free after-school youth development program, available from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., that the CBO has been operating since before establishing the school. More than half of the Academy students join other young people of all ages from the neighborhood and participate in activities that include theater, dance, music, public art, martial arts, science and technology, video production, and various sports. These activities, led by El Puente staff, are intended to elicit voluntary student participation in community campaigns for democracy and human rights. Often, after-school activities incorporate the interdisciplinary theme Academy students are exploring in their regular studies. Young people who participated in public art, for example, created murals proclaiming, "We have the right to breathe" and gigantic and colorful papier-mâché figures for a public display on local industrial pollution and resulting health problems such as asthma. In addition to these learning opportunities, students attending the after-school program participate at least two hours weekly in the program's Liberation Hall, which provides targeted academic support and tutoring.

Successful Transitions

As described earlier, CBO schools work to ensure that each aspect of the students' educational experience prepares them in some way to transition to postsecondary education, training, employment, and family and community life. Comprehensive standards and diverse and relevant learning experiences do this by addressing work-related social and civic skills and by requiring critical thinking and active application of knowledge in real-world situations. Counseling, mentoring, and other formal connections to positive, caring adults contribute to this preparation by helping students learn to take personal responsibility for their lives. In addition to these transition supports that are interwoven throughout the school experience, most CBO schools profiled provide intensive and targeted supports from the time a young person first enters the program through graduation – and sometimes beyond – to ensure that students have the information and assistance they need to make decisions about positive post-high school experiences.

> ***"College wasn't even an issue for a lot of these kids when they started here. But once they have been here a while and start to see how they can improve their grades, and see other young people in their groups preparing for college, they start to think 'I can do that, too'."***
>
> *— Mayra Lopez, South Brooklyn Community Academy*

Early, targeted, and intensive supports that facilitate transition to postsecondary education and gainful employment and careers are critical for the many students who come to CBO schools with high rates of school failure and a lack of future direction. In many CBO schools, this process begins by working with students to establish individual education and "life management" plans that outline future goals and steps to achieve those goals. Postsecondary education, in particular, seems elusive to many of these young people whose family members often have little or no related experience for them to consider or model. "College wasn't even an issue for a lot of these kids when they started here. But once they have been here a while and start to see how they can improve their grades, and see other young people in their groups preparing for college, they start to think, 'I can do that, too,'" explained Marya Lopez at South Brooklyn Community Academy.

All of the CBO schools profiled have strategies in place to encourage students to consider postsecondary education as a future option. When students may be the first in their family to consider college, schools also involve the families in this process, informing them of options and resources and addressing their concerns. Some schools provide free preparation classes for SATs and state-mandated high-stakes tests, supporting students in the days before the exam with healthy meals and relaxation techniques. In other schools, formal college preparation classes enable students to navigate the college identification and application process, and

in still others, students work through this process with their regular counselors or a designated college counselor. Several schools take students to college fairs or to visit colleges.

All work closely with students to acquire the necessary financial aid and identify scholarships. YouthBuild Philadelphia students, and some students at East Bay Conservation Corps, are coenrolled in AmeriCorps and receive an education award for postsecondary education. College bridge programs, such as the Diploma Plus program at ABCD University High School and the Post-Secondary Option program at Minneapolis Urban League Street Academy and American Indian OIC Career Immersion High School, provide students with the opportunity to experience and earn credits in community college and college courses tuition-free during high school. The numbers of students who transition immediately to postsecondary education varies greatly among the schools, but in all cases, students who have been very alienated from the possibility of postsecondary education receive the encouragement, information, and assistance they need to make it a reality after graduation or later in life.

Arnaldo Rivas, a 2000 graduate of Shalom High School and current freshman at the University of Wisconsin/Parkside, described the difference this type of support made in his decision to attend college: "They gave me the push that I needed for college. Shalom helped give me hope for myself and my future. Everybody

there played a part in giving me that hope." Mr. Rivas is pursuing a major in music therapy, a field he learned about doing volunteer work with mentally and physically challenged young people as a part of his school experience at Shalom.

All of the CBO schools profiled provide strategic supports to students who are seeking employment or training opportunities during or after their high school education. Counselors in YouthBuild Philadelphia's career development department and case managers in the Corps-to-Career initiative at San Francisco Conservation Corps and East Bay Conservation Corps guide students through a process of career exploration and preparation, helping them to assess their skills and interests, develop resumes and interview techniques, connect to employers, and further employment training and education. Counselors and case managers cultivate relationships with local employers and unions, as well as community colleges, universities, trade schools, and other employment training programs, and host career fairs where students can make contact with them. All three of these CBO schools maintain contact with program graduates, following up with them monthly for the first year after graduation, and continuing to provide them with assistance as needed in finding employment or further training.

Other CBO schools with work-based learning components also connect students to employment and careers in a variety of ways. CBOs, such as Arizona Call-A-Teen and Action for Boston

Community Development, that offer employment training programs under the federal Workforce Investment Act, can co-enroll students from their schools in these programs, thereby providing them access to additional job skills training and summer and after-school jobs. At schools such as American Indian OIC Career Immersion High School and ABCD's University High School, where internships are an integral part of the educational program, students explore career options and may even find jobs through their internship providers. At Shalom High School, some students have been offered lucrative jobs by the community members who evaluated their defense of graduation. Finally, in a few cases, graduates of CBO schools have spent time later in the CBO and/or the school as employees, offering students a positive example of success.

photo by

OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION

CBO schools reengage young people in their own education and development by giving them opportunities to become active participants, valuable resources, and capable leaders. Students have a range of formal and informal opportunities to contribute their ideas, skills, talents, and energy to shape their own learning environments and their communities. The CBO Schools' diverse and relevant learning experiences integrate many of these opportunities into the curriculum. The close and positive relationships at CBO schools make it more likely that students will take advantage of opportunities outside the curriculum. CBO schools maintain high and comprehensive expectations of what young people can contribute to their own education, school, and community and what they can achieve academically.

The opportunity to be productive, contributing members of their schools and communities can be a transforming experience for many students who have felt powerless and disconnected from active participation in learning, school life, and community involvement. The supportive environment at CBO schools encourages many students to nurture their strengths and talents, leading them to become involved in activities they may have shied away from in other schools. Students often indicated that

these opportunities to be contributing members of the school and community are what solidified their engagement in school and assisted in their own self-investment. James, a student at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, told us that he had trouble adapting to the school at first but said: "Because I got involved in a lot of things, like basketball and student council, it didn't make sense for me to leave."

The Learning Experience and School Life

The learning experience at CBO schools provides young people with opportunities to contribute to their own and each other's education. The project- and work-based learning and authentic assessments that many CBO schools emphasize require students to be active learners, and, in many cases, where cooperative learning and teamwork are required, active teachers. Integration of these roles take place at several schools where students sit on the committee to evaluate graduation portfolios. Some schools involve students in the development of curriculum. Students at Shalom High School work with staff members to reassess and develop the 300 skills across six content areas that are one part of their graduation requirements. Teachers at several schools regularly consult with students on their experience with course material and use this feedback to select and plan future course themes and projects.

At American Indian OIC Career Immersion High School, for

example, teachers hold roundtable discussions with students throughout the year to explain in detail the state's mandated graduation standards and allow students to generate ideas and decide, where possible, how they will meet these standards. The Minnesota standards provide some flexibility with regard to content in meeting competencies in skill-based learning areas. To fulfill a "History through Culture" requirement in the "Inquiry" learning area, for example, students helped to design a Native History class that examined the relationship between the U.S. government and American Indian tribes from both perspectives. The class conducted oral histories with lawyers knowledgeable about treaties as well as tribal government leaders and elders. The following year, students decided to fulfill this requirement by studying mythology, from Greek and American Indian to contemporary, such as urban legends.

> ***"Because I got involved in a lot of things, like basketball and student council, it didn't make sense for me to leave."***
>
> *— James, El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice*

CBO schools also provide a variety of structured opportunities for students to positively influence the quality of relationships and school atmosphere. At YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, students participate in committees to interview and hire new staff and faculty. In many of the schools, students serve informally as

peer mentors in staff-led counseling groups. Students at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice serve as "peer mediators" to help resolve problems or conflicts other students may be facing. Youth leaders at South Brooklyn Community Academy are responsible for establishing and reinforcing community rules and goals and for designing new-student orientation. Three students sit on Shalom High School's discipline committee, which investigates and resolves situations involving disciplinary infractions, and each student has a one-third vote in deciding appropriate resolutions. In several schools, students serve alongside staff as cofacilitators of regular schoolwide meetings.

Many of the schools profiled have student councils or other student advocacy bodies made up of elected members in some cases, but often open to any students who are interested. In several of the schools profiled, these groups are very active and provide yet another opportunity for students to positively influence the school climate. Whether through these groups or regular schoolwide meetings, students are involved in discussing issues affecting their safety and comfort in school, and they undertake related projects. The Student Council at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, which meets every Friday after school, developed and implemented "Bug-Out Day" in an effort to help first-year students to become acquainted with their peers and adapt to the school's environment. Student groups also undertake more traditional activities, such as schoolwide holiday celebrations, dances, fashion and talent shows,

"All men who have turned out worth anything have had their chief hand in their own education."

—Sir Walter Scott, 1830

and other social events and outings. Members of some student advocacy groups, such as the Youth Congress at YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, represent their schools in larger student forums and participate in leadership training.

Students at several schools also have opportunities to contribute their skills and ideas to a range of other school activities, including yearbooks, literary magazines, school newspapers or newsletters, and drama clubs. Most of the schools provide some opportunities in the arts, whether through workshops, elective classes, or after-school activities. About half of the schools profiled provide students opportunities to participate in team sports, usually basketball and football. At some schools, there are special yearly opportunities to contribute and develop their talents, such as the Midnight Shakespeare project, which allows 20 to 30 East Bay Conservation Corpsmembers and staff members to participate in a twice-weekly evening course to learn communication and performance skills, discipline, and teamwork while studying and interpreting Shakespeare's works. At the end of the ten-week course, operated in conjunction with the San Francisco Parks and Recreation Department, students perform Shakespearean scenes and monologues for community members on a set they build themselves. Anywhere from five to 15 El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice students participate yearly in the Tufts University-sponsored Education for Public Inquiry and International Citizenship. In an elective class at school, these young

people explore a global dilemma – for example, issues of race and ethnicity – from the perspective of citizens of a particular country and prepare a report on their findings. At a symposium of all participating schools, including many elite private and public high schools, students discuss and debate these issues from the perspective of the countries they studied.

School and Community

Because community service is central to the mission of most CBOs, CBO schools are committed to helping young people understand their potential to contribute positively to and have an impact on their larger communities, and to providing them with meaningful opportunities to do this. As a result, service learning and citizenship education at most CBO schools are more than passing reform fads, additive curricular components, or afterthought graduation requirements. Many CBO schools' educational programs are designed to encourage students to reflect on the value of their studies, work, and other pursuits in the context of greater community good, and are imbued with the notion that active civic involvement and meaningful community service are primary goals of education and work in a democratic society.

At CBO schools, such as YouthBuild Philadelphia and San Francisco and East Bay Conservation Corps charter schools, service learning is at the center of the curriculum and educational mission. Students at these schools undertake work-based learning

in construction and conservation within the context of community service. Students earn an hourly wage for their work, enabling them to meet their responsibilities without abandoning a high school education, while gaining a clear understanding of how this work contributes to positive community and personal development. The houses that YouthBuild Philadelphia students rehabilitate from start to finish help to transform entire blocks in blighted, once historic neighborhoods. Low-income families are able to buy these homes, often their first, for between $50,000 and $55,000. Students working at one site told us proudly how they gave a detailed tour of a recently finished home to the lucky family moving in!

> ***"It's good that they keep us aware of what is going on politically and help us to become active. At a regular school, you would just do what you have to do and get out."***
>
> *—Bunny, El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice*

At the East Bay Conservation Corps Corpsmember Charter School, work-based learning projects are developed through contracts with local and state government agencies, and through grants from private organizations. One East Bay Conservation Corps Corpsmember crew observed in action was helping to cultivate a large organic community garden in the midst of a low-income housing area. Students told us that the garden would

serve the community in several different ways, such as providing residents with healthy foods such as collard greens, cabbage, and pumpkins, and providing an outdoor science classroom for elementary school students to learn about horticulture, composting, and plant identification. One Corpsmember, Harlan, summed up the significance of this combined work-based and service-learning experience: "I'm trying to earn my diploma, but I came here to change my life and my community."

Many of the CBO schools profiled integrate community service and other forms of civic engagement into project-based classroom activities in traditional subject areas or offer innovative classes with this focus. Students at El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice have integrated their studies, research, and writing across disciplines with social action on critical community issues. Students have presented their research on unfair local lending practices, minimum wage determination, lead poisoning and asthma, and harmful advertising to elected officials and in other community forums. Bunny, a senior at El Puente in 2000, explained the importance of this approach to school engagement: "It's good that they keep us aware of what is going on politically and help us to become active. At a regular school, you would just do what you have to do and get out." Students also have opportunities to interweave their class studies and after-school endeavors in public art with El Puente's other activities to affect the quality of life in their community. El Puente's Class of 1999 Youth Organizers

(YO!) group started a local farmer's market, led students in a march for immigrant rights, and participated in public rallies protesting police brutality.

YouthBuild Philadelphia students participate in an AmeriCorps "Giving Back" class as part of fulfilling their employability competency. Students attend weekly service-learning seminars and complete 900 service hours by participating in projects dealing with education, environment, safety, and human services in the community. In the Adopt-a-Block project, for example, students worked with staff from another local CBO, their math teachers, and AmeriCorps staff to help revitalize a neighborhood block. Students reclaimed an abandoned lot and planned and built a community park on the location. Students who successfully complete the project receive the standard AmeriCorps $2,000+ education award for postsecondary education. Several YouthBuild Philadelphia graduates have returned later to become full-time AmeriCorps interns in this part of the school's program.

Students at ABCD University High School complete a Community Action Project class as part of the Diploma Plus program. As a class, students identify community issues and problems, choose one they would like to influence, research the topic, plan a project to address the issue, undertake the project, and develop and present a class portfolio on the project. In the 1999-2000 class, students organized a campaign in support of a bill reinstating a

state budget line item for the Massachusetts Summer Works program, which provides young people with summer jobs. Students visited with several legislators to solicit support for the bill, which did pass, and educated community members on the topic while collecting signatures for their petitions. During this process, students became concerned about lack of voter awareness and activity, spurring the idea for the subsequent Community Action Project: a school- and community-wide voter registration project before the 2000 presidential election.

Students at Arizona Call-A-Teen Center of Excellence Charter High School participate in an interdisciplinary community arts project in which they canvass their school's historic neighborhood, interviewing local residents, business owners, and organization members to learn about their role and history in the community. Students capture what they learned from this ethnographic research through photography, models of neighborhood landmarks, essays, poetry, and reports that they develop into an exhibit that has been displayed at the central library and the State Capitol. Shalom High School students participate in food pantry and other service projects as a part of their human relations class, in which they learn about personal relationships, conflict resolution, values, community service, communication, and cultural awareness.

Many CBO schools also provide students with opportunities to have an impact on their community outside of class. Parenting

teens at Grandview High School help to organize a monthly evening event, "Two Generations in Focus," that brings in speakers and plan activities that enable parents and their children to socialize and obtain information on parenting issues. Students at East Bay Conservation Corps Corpsmember Charter School took advantage of school-community meetings to educate their peers on Proposition 21, the controversial measure granting prosecutors sole approval for trying youths 14 or older in adult courts. Students at South Brooklyn Community Academy can participate in the school's student leadership team, called STOP (Students Teaching On Prevention), that was started four years ago when young people in school-community meetings expressed their concern over youth violence in the community and a desire to do something about it. STOP members (who meet weekly) decided that one way to address youth violence was to help other youth to become proficient in decision making, critical thinking, communication, self-esteem, conflict resolution, and team building. These student leaders helped to develop a leadership training curriculum and workshop that they present at youth programs and other schools, including the mainstream high school that most of them had left.

Shalom High School students can participate in the school's chapter of Public Achievement, a national experience-based civic education initiative started at the University of Minnesota's Center for Democracy and Citizenship. Public Achievement aims to engage students in politics, democracy, and citizenship by helping

them to become active creators, decision makers, and change agents in their schools and communities. Public Achievement participants work with adult coaches to identify public problems and create and undertake strategies to address those problems. Shalom's Public Achievement groups had identified problems to address in both their school and community. Students designed peer mediation activities to address immaturity issues at school, and waged a "keep the school clean" campaign to remedy the "lack of responsibility" students demonstrated with regard to the school's physical space. Public Achievement participants had identified homelessness as a community problem to address, planning clothing and food drives as a local-level response.

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MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL OF CBO SCHOOLS

The integration of youth development principles and effective educational practices described here exemplifies the value of CBO schools as resources in reengaging young people in education and supporting their efforts to achieve high standards. The lessons drawn from these schools have value for educators and CBOs working with young people of all ages and backgrounds, as well as for policy makers working at a systemic level toward the goal of high achievement for all students. CBO schools and other alternative community-based educators are resources with particular value for effecting reforms in the public high school system that help young people most often left behind to reach for these goals. To begin maximizing the potential of these schools to successfully reengage more young people, and to influence positive change in the public high school system, several serious challenges must be addressed.

Increase Access to Resources

Most CBO schools are trying to provide comprehensive learning environments for highly undereducated students with too few resources. As this report documents, CBO schools provide an extensive range of academic and developmental supports and opportunities that help many students, most of whom enter with low math and reading skill levels, to become reengaged in

education and earn their high school diplomas. In some cases, CBO schools educate a high number of graduates compared with the public education dollars they receive. For example, Minneapolis district officials report that CBO and other contract alternative schools receive 2 percent of the school district's budget, yet they account for 20 percent of the district's graduates.

Many CBO schools receive less state and local per-pupil funding than other public schools, and some CBO schools do not receive such funding at all. Due to restricted access to state and local education funds, many CBO schools rely heavily on other public and private funding sources that are often limited and require these schools to struggle continuously for sufficient resources to sustain their programs. Moreover, many CBO schools do not receive other available state education funds for physical facilities, transportation, and additional instruction support. Few CBO schools profiled are able to provide students with on-site science labs, libraries, and recreational facilities.

If CBO schools are to hold young people to high standards and help them to graduate, the schools need access to resources that enable them to adapt their programs to address the academic gaps of their students and the demands of standards-based reform. Schools that work to educate these students and help them to flourish in public education certainly require equitable rather than restricted access to all possible resources. Moreover, access to

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these resources must be stable, ongoing, and provided in an inclusive manner that enables CBO schools and other community-based alternative schools to operate as full and legitimate members of their local secondary school system. Addressing these challenges will involve analyzing current policies and funding at local, state, and federal levels that support these schools, and using this information to advocate for stronger policies and additional public resources.

Strengthen CBO Schools

CBO schools and other community-based alternative schools frequently operate in isolation from each other and from the larger education systems in which they are located. Formal networks of CBO schools and other community-based alternative schools exist in such cities as Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and New York. These networks can be important in assisting the schools to share resources and promising practices, and to address the common policy and funding challenges they face. The existence of these networks is often key to securing and/or sustaining the public funding that allows CBO schools and other community-based alternative schools to survive.

Such networks could also be pivotal in helping existing CBO schools, as well as CBOs considering starting a school, to strengthen their instructional practices to address the demands of standards-based reform. Many CBO schools face serious

challenges in addressing these demands because of the large numbers of students who come to them with histories of educational failure and low levels of academic skills. To continue to help young people succeed, CBO schools will require access to informational resources and capacity-building networks that can provide ongoing support to improve instructional practices.

There is a growing movement to strengthen and connect CBO schools and other community-based alternative educators, and to publicize the importance of these schools as valuable educators of the large numbers of young people who are not succeeding in mainstream public high schools. Other groups and organizations involved in building this movement include American Youth Policy Forum, Council of Chief State School Officers, Jobs for the Future, National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, National Center on Education and the Economy, National Governors' Association, National Youth Employment Coalition, and YouthBuild USA, among others. Efforts of some of these groups include developing tools for self-assessment and identification of promising practices, articulating potential linkages between these programs and mainstream public high schools, and exploring strategies to access additional resources. Other CBOs, educators, policy makers, and funders must all look for ways to support this movement.

Connect CBO Schools to Public High School System Reform

The critical role of CBO schools and other alternative community-based educators in the public high school system must be understood and valued. Due to a lack of good information and support, many of these schools suffer from an erroneous reputation as second and last chance remedial warehouses and credit factories. Often these schools are as marginalized as the equally mislabeled young people who attend them. As a result, these schools have largely been overlooked in the push to reform educational systems and bring high standards and achievement to all young people.

Increasing the information available on and resources available to CBO schools and other community-based alternative schools and programs is an important first step in connecting these schools to high school reform efforts in their communities. An equally important step, however, is building strong linkages between the mainstream high school system and the CBO schools. As mentioned earlier, CBO schools and other community-based alternative schools and programs generally operate in isolation from the mainstream public high schools in the cities in which they are located. Although these CBO schools frequently offer important educational opportunities for young people who are failing in the mainstream system, there are insufficient opportunities for CBO schools to explore

and share strategies and effective practices with other public high schools.

Linking local public high schools to the previously described formalized networks of CBO schools and other community-based alternative schools may offer one option for cross-fertilization of ideas. Such networks offer a potential bridge for increased communication and capacity building with mainstream public high schools. In some cities, public school systems are reaching out to CBOs, and asking for their help in designing and operating new schools for students who are not achieving. CBO school leaders in Philadelphia influenced the development of district-run schools that provide older and out-of-school youth with a range of options and supports to complete their high school degrees. The Boston Public Schools likewise recruited a CBO school administrator to help establish and become principal of the district-run Boston Adult Technical Academy. Now one of Boston's 16 high schools, the Academy educates older students, most of whom are recent immigrants.

It is precisely these types of linkages that make CBO schools such timely and valuable resources in the movement to reinvent public high schools in the United States. The large number of students who do not complete high school in our large and mid-size urban communities presents a critical challenge to all those who work with young people in any capacity. Students, parents,

teachers, administrators, policy makers, and community stakeholders must look beyond mainstream institutions and conventional approaches as they address this challenge. Although CBO schools currently educate relatively few students overall, they have demonstrated a capacity to reengage and educate young people whose learning styles and needs were not met in mainstream public high schools. By integrating the youth development principles and effective, innovative educational practices described here, many CBO schools have transformed the high school education experience and changed the lives of young people who otherwise might have been left behind.

It is time to recognize CBO schools' potential contributions to the challenges facing public high school systems in educating all students for the 21st century. CBO schools do not provide the only answer, but they certainly can be an instrumental part of the solution. Educators, policy makers, and CBOs must take the steps that will enable CBO schools to strengthen their work and become more effective partners in building high school systems that support quality education, high standards and achievement, and healthy development for *all* young people.

Profiles in Transformational Education

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Action for Boston Community Development University High School

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University High School has been operated by Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) as a diploma-awarding, alternative education program of the Boston Public Schools for seven years. Students at ABCD are often referred by guidance counselors in public schools, social workers, counselors in the juvenile justice system, other students, or parents. The school's curriculum is competency-based and uses classroom testing and portfolio assessment. ABCD students participate in the "Diploma Plus" program model, which integrates standards-based academics and life skills preparation. As a part of Diploma Plus, students complete work-based learning experiences and at least one college-level course before graduation. A large human services agency that operates a network of programs in Boston's low-income neighborhoods, ABCD is able to provide students access to an array of services, including child care, housing, and fuel assistance; summer employment programs; GED preparation; and higher educational opportunities, including ABCD's own Urban College. Students have regularly scheduled meetings with the schools' two counselors and participate in weekly community meetings. Students have opportunities to contribute to their school as designated peer leaders who conduct team-building activities and participate in leadership activities, and to influence their community through the Community Action Project component of the Diploma Plus program.

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Action for Boston Community Development University High School

Operating CBO	Action for Boston Community Development
Year School Founded	1994
2000 School Budget	$445,880
2000 Enrollment	151
# of School Staff Members	11
Student/Teacher Ratio	13:1
Student Ages	16-21years old
Grade Levels	9-12
Student Gender Breakdown	58% female 42% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	77% African American 7% Caucasian
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	35%
Number of Graduates in 2000	10
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	3
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	6

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American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center Career Immersion High School

1845 East Franklin Ave.
Minneapolis, MN 55404
Phone: 612-341-3358
Fax: 612-341-3766
gregh@aioic.org
www.aioic.org

Mr. D. Peer Nyberg
Education Director

Mr. Greg Herder
Lead Teacher

American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center (AIOIC) Career Immersion High School is a contract alternative diploma program of the Minneapolis Public Schools, providing educational and career opportunities to formerly out-of-school American Indian young people. The curriculum features a range of projects aligned with the Minnesota graduation standards in ten learning areas, and incorporates SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) employability competencies. Project assignments, which students help to shape, frequently incorporate community involvement, technology skills, and sociopolitical or historical issues pertaining to American Indians. AIOIC's school-to-career program includes pathways in health, business, engineering/manufacturing, and information technology, and connects students to paid and credit-bearing employment or community service opportunities. Through AIOIC's health pathway, students train to become certified nursing assistants as part of a partnership with St. Mary's University medical center. The Post-Secondary Enrollment Option also allows students to attend college courses and earn college credit while working toward their high school diplomas. In addition, students have access to AIOIC's GED preparation courses, business and office technology training, child care facility, and various social services.

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American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center Career Immersion High School

Operating CBO	American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center
Year School Founded	1995
2000 School Budget	$300,000
2000 Enrollment	100
# of School Staff Members	5
Student/Teacher Ratio	15:1
Student Ages	15-21 years old
Grade Levels	9-12
Student Gender Breakdown	60% female 40% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	100% American Indian
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	30%
Number of Graduates in 2000	1
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	1
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	1

Arizona Call-A-Teen
Center of Excellence Charter High School

649 North 6th Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 850013
Phone: 602-252-6721
Fax: 602-252-2952
gloriaj@azcallateen.k12.az.us
www.azcallateen.k12.az.us

Ms. Bernice Lever
Chief Executive Officer

Ms. Gloria Junkersfeld
Principal

Arizona Call-A-Teen has been providing education, job training, and employment opportunities to youth ages 14-21, and some adults, since 1976. In 1995 it was one of the first organizations encouraged to obtain a state charter and, thus, established the Center of Excellence Charter High School (COE), which offers students a comprehensive high school diploma program. Students work with staff to design an academic plan based on COE's competency-based, ungraded secondary curriculum design, which incorporates the State Essential Standards and SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) skills. COE offers students a flexible schedule: a four-hour morning and four-hour afternoon session in which each class is two hours long. Students may choose to attend either session, or, if they are close to graduation and meet specific requirements, both sessions. The school works to implement integrated, project-based approaches and uses both classroom testing and portfolio assessment. COE's bilingual community resource liaison connects parents to the school, and students and parents to community resources they need. COE's part-time special education teacher works with teachers, students, and parents to support the needs of special education students. A schoolwide Student Council provides leadership opportunities for some students. COE students also have access to Arizona Call-A-Teen's career training and summer employment programs.

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Arizona Call-A-Teen
Center of Excellence Charter High School

Operating CBO	Arizona Call-A-Teen
Year School Founded	1995
2000 School Budget	$1,290,000
2000 Enrollment	151
# of School Staff Members	11.5
Student/Teacher Ratio	15:1
Student Ages	14-21 years old
Grade Levels	9-12
Student Gender Breakdown	48% female 52% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	73% Hispanic 9% African American
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	88%
Number of Graduates in 2000	30
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	3
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	19

East Bay Conservation Corps Corpsmember Charter School

1021 Third St.
Oakland, CA 94607
Phone: 510-992-7800
Fax: 510-992-7950
www.ebcc-school.org

Ms. Joanna Lennon, Executive Director

Mr. Jonathan Albert, Youth Development Manager

The East Bay Conservation Corps (EBCC), one of more than 100 youth conservation and service corps programs operating nationally, was founded in 1983 and is a multiprogram organization promoting youth development through environmental stewardship and community service. Operating as a diploma-awarding charter school since 1995, EBCC provides a job and high school diploma program to about 250 young adults, ages 18-24, most of whom have left high school and half of whom are parents. Corpsmembers (CMs) work 32 hours a week on crews with trained leaders on projects such as building community gardens in low-income housing areas, recycling, and maintaining trails and parks. CMs attend classes four hours a week and half-day workshops on Fridays. The curriculum requires mastery in five competency areas (academics, employability, life skills, citizenship, and communication) and attainment of a 12.9 skill level on the Test of Adult Basic Education in reading, math, and language. CMs work on developmental competencies in the field (monthly evaluations track their progress) and through workshops in areas such as sex education, job search, performing arts, and community resources. Support staff include a social worker who counsels CMs and connects them to necessary services and a post-Corps employability support coordinator. Some CMs may participate in EBCC's AmeriCorps and middle school service-learning programs. EBCC will build on its experience with education, service learning, and youth development to establish a K-12 charter school.

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East Bay Conservation Corps
Corpsmember Charter School

Operating CBO	East Bay Conservation Corps
Year School Founded	1995
2000 School Budget	$900,000
2000 Enrollment	125
# of School Staff Members	35
Student/Teacher Ratio	25:1
Student Ages	18-24 years old
Grade Levels	9-12
Student Gender Breakdown	20% female 80% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	81% African American 9% Asian/Pacific
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	98%
Number of Graduates in 2000	3
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	0
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	3

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice

211 South 4th St.
Brooklyn, NY 11211
Phone: 718-599-2895
Fax: 718-599-3087

Mr. Luis Garden-Acosta
and Ms. Frances Lucerna
Co-Founders

Ms. Alfa Anderson
Acting Principal

El Puente, a community-based organization in the Williamsburg and Bushwich neighborhoods of Brooklyn, founded El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice in 1993 as part of the city-wide New Visions Schools initiative to establish small, innovative schools. Before establishing the Academy, El Puente provided a comprehensive after-school/after-work youth development program as a part of its work for social justice and community development in Williamsburg. The Academy enrolls half of its students through a selective interview process and enrolls the other half through a city-wide lottery. The curriculum stresses active, project-based learning that integrates academic areas and incorporates the CBO's work on many critical community issues, such as local industrial pollution, community health, and immigrants' rights. Students are evaluated based on projects, testing, and portfolio assessment. At the center of the Academy's educational mission is the Holistic Individualized Process, an ongoing individual and collective self-help process that supports young people taking responsibility for their own lives by creating opportunities for personal growth and leadership development in their school and wider community. Each student works with a staff mentor and the school's support services coordinator; participates in intensive preparation for applying to college, and has access to El Puente's family health clinic and Latino/multicultural arts center. El Puente continues to provide community/youth development programs at the Academy and two other sites, offering activities such as theater, dance, academic support, public art, martial arts; and video production.

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El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice

Operating CBO	El Puente
Year School Founded	1993
2000 School Budget	$1,000,000
2000 Enrollment	150
# of School Staff Members	25
Student/Teacher Ratio	15:1
Student Ages	13-19 years old
Grade Levels	9-12
Student Gender Breakdown	55% female 45% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	80% Latino 20% African American
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	88%
Number of Graduates in 2000	17
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	15
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	2

Grandview High School

1445 S. 32nd St.
Milwaukee. WI 53215
Phone: 414-672-3430
Fax: 414-672-1273
mspector@seedsofhealth.org

Ms. Marcia Spector
Executive Director

Ms. Sherry Tolkan
Education Coordinator

Seeds of Health is a social service agency that addresses the health and educational needs of adolescents, women, and children by operating two elementary schools; five Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics; and Grandview High School. Grandview was established in 1988 as a contracted Partnership School of the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) through Wisconsin's children at-risk legislation. Grandview, a full-day, comprehensive, four-year high school, enrolls 215 students ages 15-21, about 40 percent of whom are parents. The curriculum is constructed around essential relationships (self, significant others, authority, family, community, and world) with specific outcomes based on the following goals: competency in basic skills, integrated knowledge, self-motivation, social responsibility, appreciation for life, and creativity and imagination. To graduate, students must fulfill MPS credit requirements; pass proficiency assessments in math, reading, writing, and speaking/presenting; submit a high school portfolio; and present an oral defense of graduation. A support services staff of five provides case management, counseling, attendance reinforcement, and vocational guidance. Students participate in faculty-led mentoring groups, and many participate in life skills classes related to parenting. School-to-work opportunities in several areas are available, and other developmental activities include student council, sports, yearbook, and intergenerational activities with families and the on-site elementary school.

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Grandview High School

Operating CBO	Seeds of Health
Year School Founded	1988
2000 School Budget	$1,422,000
2000 Enrollment	215
# of School Staff Members	16
Student/Teacher Ratio	14:1
Student Ages	15-21 years old
Grade Levels	9-12
Student Gender Breakdown	55% female 45% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	36% White 32% Hispanic
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	66%
Number of Graduates in 2000	48
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	10
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	40

Minneapolis Urban League Street Academy

2201 Blaisdell Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
Phone: 612-874-9667
Fax: 612-870-7164
Pprice@mul.org
www.mul.org

Mr. Perry Price
Education Administrator

Ms. Marge Lewis
Principal

The Minneapolis Urban League Street Academy (MULSA) is a contract alternative junior and senior high school of the Minneapolis Public Schools serving youth ages 12-22. The Minneapolis Urban League established the Street Academy as one of the city's first public alternative high schools in 1971, and the school now serves approximately 136 students, predominately low-income African Americans. MULSA designs curriculum using a multiage- and multiability-level approach that offers students accelerated coursework while providing them with the opportunity to build on their basic skills. Curriculum often incorporates Afrocentric themes and is intended to improve student reading and writing skills in every class. The school also staffs a Title I resource room and an on-site library with more than 4,500 books. A staff of four counselors works closely with students on a range of developmental issues. Educational counselors work with each student on academic goals and progress, and other counselors offer individual and group counseling with regard to self-esteem, behavior management, and drug awareness. Career development, with an emphasis on postsecondary education, is a major focus of counseling. Students also have access to Minneapolis Urban League resources, including juvenile advocacy, housing, welfare to work, and health services. The Minneapolis Urban League also runs a pre-K-6 program and early childhood family education center and an after-school program open to all students in the public school system, and organizes tours of historically black colleges.

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Minneapolis Urban League Street Academy

Operating CBO	Minneapolis Urban League
Year School Founded	1971
2000 School Budget	$850,000
2000 Enrollment	136
# of School Staff Members	18
Student/Teacher Ratio	15:1
Student Ages	12-22 years old
Grade Levels	7-12
Student Gender Breakdown	49% female 51% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	91% African American 2% Native American
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	80%
Number of Graduates in 2000	18
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	12
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	5

San Francisco Conservation Corps/ California Charter Academy

Gorgas Avenue
P.O. Box 29003
Building 1163
San Francisco. CA 94129
Phone: 415-561-2637
Fax: 415-561-2646
cgalvez@earthlink.net
www.sfccic.org

Ms. Ann Cochran
Executive Director

Ms. Christina Galvez
Associate Director

The San Francisco Conservation Corps (SFCC), one of more than 100 youth conservation and service corps programs operating nationally, was founded in 1983 by then San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein with a mission to offer young people opportunities to develop themselves, their academic abilities, and marketable job skills while addressing community needs through service work. Corpsmembers (CMs) can earn money, work toward a high school diploma or GED, and develop their job and academic skills, leadership abilities, and environmental awareness by working on conservation and community service projects, such as restoring wetlands at the Presidio and renovating children's recreation areas in low-income housing projects. SFCC is a campus of the California Charter Academy and bases its curriculum on San Francisco public schools' requirements. CMs spend one full day each week in four 80-minute classes, and SFCC teachers frequently travel to CMs' work sites to tie class academic lessons to fieldwork. SFCC offers bilingual instruction in many classes, ESL classes, one-on-one volunteer tutoring, and a post-Corps support coordinator who links young people to employment, training, and further educational opportunities.

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San Francisco Conservation Corps/ California Charter Academy

Operating CBO	San Francisco Conservation Corps
Year School Founded	1998
2000 School Budget	$325,000
2000 Enrollment	150
# of School Staff Members	5 full time 7 part time
Student/Teacher Ratio	10:1
Student Ages	18-26 years old
Grade Levels	9-12
Student Gender Breakdown	40% female 60% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	55% African American 35% Latino
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	90%
Number of Graduates in 2000	20 diploma 11 GED
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	4
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	12

Shalom High School

1749 North 16th St.
Milwaukee. WI 53205
Phone: 414-933-5019
Fax: 414-933-5433
Shalomhs@execpc.com

Dr. Daniel Grego
Director of Educational Services

Ms. Gwendolyn Spencer
Principal

Shalom High School is operated by TransCenter for Youth. Inc., a social service and education organization that also operates three group homes for adjudicated youth, two other alternative schools, and a mentoring and community rebuilding program. Shalom began in 1973 as an evening tutorial and counseling program for adjudicated youth and, later, enabled by Wisconsin's original "Children at Risk" legislation, became a contracted Partnership School in the Milwaukee Public Schools, enrolling students who qualify under the legislation's academic and social barrier requirements. Students earn credit toward a high school diploma in traditional subject areas and through demonstrating mastery of 300 required competencies in six categories (communication, critical thinking and analysis, problem solving, valuing, environmental responsibility, and social interaction). Students are assessed through project-based and classroom work, standardized competency tests, and defense of graduation portfolios. Each student works closely with a staff member who acts as mentor and counselor to help plan and accomplish the student's individual educational goals. Students have opportunities to participate in employability training, computer education, an honors reading seminar, sports, a youth leadership development program, peer mediation, community service activities, and the school's discipline committee.

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Shalom High School

Operating CBO	TransCenter for Youth, Inc.
Year School Founded	1973
2000 School Budget	$726,118
2000 Enrollment	100
# of School Staff Members	13
Student/Teacher Ratio	10:1
Student Ages	14-19 years old
Grade Levels	9-12
Student Gender Breakdown	54% female 46% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	99% African American
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	60%
Number of Graduates in 2000	25
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	9
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	15

South Brooklyn Community Academy

173 Conover St.
Brooklyn. NY 11231
Phone: 718-422-1915
Fax: 718-422-1929
Millie_Henriquez@goodshepherds.org
www.goodshepherds.org

Ms. Millie Henriquez-McArdle. Division Director

Ms. Mayra Lopez. Program Director

South Brooklyn Community Academy (SBCA) is operated by Good Shepherd Services in collaboration with John Jay High School. a large public high school in Brooklyn. Good Shepherd Services is a multiservice agency that operates a network of community-based programs in South Brooklyn as well as short- and long-term residential programs for adolescents. SBCA was initiated in 1980 at the request of the Mayor's Office of Youth Policy, specifically to work with large numbers of young people who were dropping out of John Jay. Young people recruited to the school must live in the John Jay catchment area and must have been absent from school for 30 days or more in any given year. At SBCA, students participate in a full academic program that meets all current requirements leading to a high school diploma. In addition, Good Shepherd provides overall leadership and supervision for the school and offers an extensive array of services and opportunities that are a part of young people's experience at SBCA. These include individual and group counseling, crisis intervention and case management provided by four full-time advocate counselors, as well as youth leadership development and community service activities and career and college counseling. To build a sense of community and peer support in the program, students participate in facilitated peer groups twice a week and monthly community meetings.

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South Brooklyn Community Academy

Operating CBO	Good Shepherd Services
Year School Founded	1980
2000 School Budget	$340,000
2000 Enrollment	101
# of School Staff Members	11
Student/Teacher Ratio	25:1
Student Ages	16-20 years old
Grade Levels	9-12
Student Gender Breakdown	50% female 50% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	60% Latino 35% African American
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	100%
Number of Graduates in 2000	37
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	20
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	4

YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School

619 Catherine St.
Philadelphia, PA 19147
Phone: 215-627-8671
Fax: 215-627-8112
angelr@youthbuildphilly.org
www.youthbuildphilly.org

Mr. Angel Rodriguez
Executive Director

Ms. Susan Ellison
Education Director

YouthBuild Philadelphia was established in 1992 under the national YouthBuild model, offering unemployed youth ages 18-20 a combination of academic skills, construction skills, job training, and leadership development. It expanded its program to a second Philadelphia site and, in 1997, became one of the first YouthBuild programs nationwide to attain charter school status. The school enrolls students through an interview process and provides new students with a one-week "mental toughness" orientation period. The school awards high school diplomas at the end of its ten-month program to students who complete the required number of credits in five competency areas: communication skills, academics, construction, employability, and attendance. Students fulfill these competencies in traditional academic, career development, life skills, computer education, and AmeriCorps/service-learning classes and on-the-job construction training. Rehabilitating abandoned houses for sale to low-income families is designed to bolster students' employability, self-esteem, and leadership development. Each student works with a case manager who supports personal responsibility and job readiness through a problem-solving approach to the challenges students face. Career development counselors work with students to pursue postgraduation employment or postsecondary educational opportunities. The school's service-learning classes and projects and student-led Youth Congress also support students' leadership development.

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YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School

Operating CBO	Philadelphia Youth for Change
Year School Founded	1992
2000 School Budget	$3,900,000
2000 Enrollment	200
# of School Staff Members	48
Student/Teacher Ratio	15:1
Student Ages	18-20 years old
Grade Levels	grade 12
Student Gender Breakdown	50% female 50% male
Student Ethnic Diversity Breakdown	90% African American
Students Who Qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch	N/A
Number of Graduates in 2000	101
2000 Graduates Who Attend College or Other Instructional Programs	20%
2000 Graduates Who Are Employed	80%

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development, in partnership with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, co-convened three roundtable meetings during the course of this project. We thank the following individuals for their participation in those meetings.

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American Youth Policy Forum

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Harry Bruell
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Joshua Weber
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Wendy Wolf
Center for Assessment and Policy Development

"A CBO School is a public school that is operated by a community-based organization (CBO) and which offers a diploma-granting academic program."

CBO Schools are part of an evolving effort to reform public education, to involve more of the public in the lives of young people, and to create diverse learning environments so that every young person is well educated.

Daniel Cuevas, Ph.D., Director of Education
Youth Guidance

CBO Schools like Shaw Unity High School give youth hope in school. They help our students set goals and then support us to reach them. The most important thing for me was [illegible]

L. Cliff Cashin
Shaw Unity High School

[illegible]

Mike Hennigan, Jr., Vice President
Good Shepherd [illegible] Red Bird Press

[illegible]

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